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LADY WEDDERBURN'S WISH.

A Tale of the Crimean War.

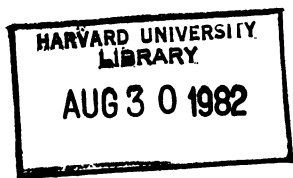
By JAMES GRANT,

AUTHOR OF "THE ROMANCE OF WAR," "FIRST LOVE AND LAST LOVE,"
"THE GIRL HE MARRIED," ETC.

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LADY WEDDERBURN'S WISH.

CHAPTER I.

THE DESPATCH BOX.

"THE Colonel has written to the effect, that the regiment has received 'letters of readiness' for foreign service, and that the route for the East may come at any moment."

"My dear boy, Cyril, and you will be leaving us."

"For old Gib or Malta in the first place, and the Crimea after," continued Cyril, glancing again at the letter he had just opened; "but the Colonel adds, that until I am telegraphed for, my leave of absence may remain intact—it is a little anomalous; but he is a thorough good fellow, the Colonel!"

"And what of Horace?"

"There is no word of Horace, dear mother; but he will probably be detailed for the dépôt."

"My darling Cyril!" exclaimed the anxious mother, as her eyes filled with tears, and her upper lip quivered.

The "darling" referred to was a handsome young fellow of five feet ten or so, with a thick curly brown head of hair, shorn short to the regimental pattern, and most unexceptionable whiskers; one who rather considered himself as the model officer of the Royal Fusileers, in which distinguished corps he—Cyril Wedderburn, then on leave of absence—held the rank of Captain; and now having laid the Colonel's letter beside his plate—for the family were at breakfast—he forthwith, and with appetite unimpaired by the prospect of a speedy and too surely perilous change of scene, attacked the drumstick of a devilled turkey.

Gervase Asloane, the family butler—a portly individual, in an ample white waistcoat and suit of black—had but a few minutes before placed the Russia leather despatch box, with its brass plate, bearing the family arms, &c., beside Sir John Wedderburn, who had unlocked it, and distributed the contents among the party at table, which consisted only of Lady Wedderburn,

Miss Flora M'Caw, her companion, a Highland maiden of doubtful age but undoubted pedigree; her two sons, Cyril and Robert; her nephew, Horace Ramornie, son of a deceased sister, and who was junior lieutenant in Cyril's regiment; and a visitor, Chesters of Chesterhaugh, a gentleman of whom the reader may hear, perhaps, too much in future.

There were no missives for Miss M'Caw; there never were any, so she had long since ceased even to affect that one might come.

"One letter for Horace," said Cyril, while decapitating an egg. "Well, old fellow, what says your despatch—to amount of account rendered, eh?"

"It is only some mess-room gossip from Probyn of ours."

"A kind fellow is Probyn."

"No word of the war as yet, Cyril, so our leaves are safe," added Horace Ramornie.

"And our lives too, for a time, eh, mamma of mine? A pink cocked hat for Bob, or invitation, or a love letter, of course? But what is up with you, Chesters? you look disturbed, as they say on the stage."

"Perhaps I do," whispered Chesters. "I have again backed the wrong horse, and lost a pot of money, at the last Liverpool Spring Meeting. The rain fell in torrents."

"And the course was soft?"

"Soft as butter," replied Chesters, filling his mouth with toast to check a rising malediction.

"How *can* you talk so gaily and so lightly, Cyril?" urged his mother, reproachfully, with her fine eyes more full of tears than ever.

"Why, mother, dearest, any way, both Horace and I must have had to leave you soon; the spring drills, the bore of coaching up for the half-yearly inspection, will soon begin, and then quit we should inevitably."

"In May?"

"Yes."

"And this is March; it is hard—very hard! I had formed such pleasant plans for you."

"Why don't you forward them to the Horse Guards—they might soften the hearts of the Commander-in-Chief and Adjutant-General?" said Cyril, laughing. "Another cup of coffee, Miss M'Caw, at your leisure," he added to that demure personage, who daily officiated at the magnificent silver urn and Wedgwood breakfast equipage.

"My dear Sir John," exclaimed Lady Wedderburn, suddenly, as her eyes now fell on her husband, who had remained perfectly silent, "what is the matter? You look quite pale, and—and—the letter you have read is wafered with black!"

"And edged with black, too," added Robert Wedderburn, a thoughtless, but rather pretty looking lad, about eighteen, with curly yellow hair and dark grey eyes. "What's up, papa—'whose mare is dead?'"

But the Baronet did not answer immediately; he permitted the hand retaining the letter to drop upon his knee, and his chin sank upon his breast as his head drooped forward, and he seemed to become lost in thought. Then all eyes, including those of old Gervase, the butler, were turned inquiringly towards him.

"Sir John Wedderburn, Bart., of Nova Scotia, and Willowdean in the Merse—creation, 1628," as the heralds have it, was a remarkably good-looking man, and fully six feet in height, though he *did* stoop a little now, being past his sixtieth year. His features were cleanly cut, and very noble in contour, and benign in expression, his eyes a clear grey, and his white hair started in spouts from his forehead to fall back wavily like a lion's mane. His hands, though brown—for he never wore gloves—the whip, the gun, the rod, or the weeder seldom being out of them—were well shapen and aristocratic in form, while his costume—a suit of coarse grey tweed and long brown leather leggings, as he sat at table, with a silver whistle at his button-hole, and a dogwhip in his pocket—only required his old wide-awake hat, with its row of flies and fish-hooks, to complete it; but the aforesaid hat hung in the hall without.

"My letter contains most mournful and sudden news, Katherine," said he, as a tear started to each of his eyes—an emotion all the more painful, as he was a man quite unused to the melting mood.

"You will perhaps permit me, dear Wedderburn," said she; on which Cyril took the letter from his father's passive fingers and handed it to his mother, who lifted her gold eye-glass, and, after a pause, read as follows; but not without great difficulty, as the handwriting was tremulous, and in some places degenerated to an almost illegible scrawl:—

"The Choultry, Madras.

"MY DEAR BROTHER JOHN,—My physician and old friend, of the Palmacottah Light Infantry, worthy Doctor Chutnay, who has just left me (and who will forward *this* to you), has told me that my hours are numbered now. Before this heavy fever fell upon me, I had fondly hoped to be with you once again, to inhale the pure, cool breeze that sweeps over the purple Lammermuir and all down bonnie Lauderdale; but God has willed it otherwise. I cannot live more than two or three days at the utmost, and have only strength to write, that I bequeath to you my most valuable possession on earth—my

only child Gwendoleyne—whom I know that you and dearest Katherine will love and cherish, even as your own boys, for the sake of her mother, who, to the hour of her death, loved you all so well.

"The impulsive blood of her mother's old Welsh race is in my girl's veins, and she is a warm and enthusiastic creature ; so I pray you, as one so soon to face his God as I, alone can pray, that you will be her guide and protector. She will be rich ; see that she marries worthily ; guide and watch over her lonely steps, dear John, and love—love to—but my head swims. I cannot pen another line. Be a father to my little Gwenny, and believe me your affectionate brother,

"WILLIAM WEDDERBURN."

While all listened to this in respectful silence, and the letter was passed between the brothers for re-perusal, Sir John had thrust aside his breakfast, and with his chin resting on one hand, sat gazing into the far vista of the sunny lawn, lost in sad thoughts ; but Lady Wedderburn very deliberately examined the letter in which it was enclosed, and a document which came with it.

The letter was from the physician, Doctor Chutnay, and was dated from the cantonments of the 3rd Madras N. I. It stated that "the deceased expired on the second day after the letter was written, and that his daughter, Miss Gwendoleyne Wedderburn, would leave Madras for Europe by the next P. and O. liner that came into the Roads, and that herewith he begged to enclose a copy of her poor father's will.

William Wedderburn, the younger brother of Sir John—
younger by six or seven years at least—had spent half his life in the Indian Civil Service, and had realised a handsome fortune by his lucky speculations in the staple produce of India, such as cotton, indigo, rice, and coffee ; and by his will it would appear that, save a few thousands bequeathed to Sir John, he left the bulk of his property, more than three hundred thousand pounds, to his orphan daughter, including a "garden-house" like an Oriental palace on the Choultry Plain, shares in the Agra Bank, Indian Stock, and—Heaven only knew all what more !

The contents of this letter affected all at the table in various degrees.

Lady Wedderburn had scarcely—and her sons had never—seen, though they had heard so much of this rich Indian uncle, who yearly sent home such magnificent and graceful (because suitable) presents to the family. He had been a kind of myth to all, save Sir John ; so personally his death stirred no deep or tender chord in their hearts.

Her first idea was that the thousands now so suddenly bequeathed would be a seasonable aid in pushing on Robert at college and bringing him out for the bar ; also in purchasing a majority for Cyril in some regiment that was *not* going to the East ; and then, if the orphan cousin was handsome, who could say what might happen ? the Madras heiress would make an excellent wife for one of them.

Her next thoughts ran on the fashion and expense of mourning, for the whole household, even to the lodge gatekeepers, would require to be put in black. Was a black hammer-cloth necessary for the carriage ? Gaiety, they could have none of it for a time—a confounded bore, Robert thought, “when a fellow had so many invitations on hand and in prospect.” Then as the little heiress would be here anon ; which rooms was she to have ? The best of course, after her own. All these ideas swept in quick succession through her busy brain.

Chesters of Chesterhaugh thought of the heiress’s thousands and his own ugly betting-book. He played with his knife and fork ; wondered what she was like, and ventured to enquire her age.

“She will be eighteen in May. Poor girl ! and quite an orphan ; but so rich, Captain Chesters !”

The poor companion sighed, for she too had been long friendless ; but no lacs of rupees ever fell to the great Celtic line of the M’Caw.

Horace Ramornie remembered that eight years before this he too had come an orphan to Willowdean, but “so poor ;” and now he had no thought or interest in the matter, save surprise to see tears falling silently over the bronzed cheek of bluff and jolly Sir John Wedderburn. But the memory of the latter was wandering away into the past, and he could recall the lithe, supple, and handsome figure of that dead brother, a blue-eyed and golden-haired lad, as he went forth to seek his fortune in the sunny East, with mingled hope and sorrow in his heart, and their mother’s tears and kisses lingering on his cheek ; and he could recall many a happy, happy hour they had spent together under yonder old trees, under the roof of Willowdean—days of nutting and bird-nesting in the summer woods, of trouting in the Leader and Whitadder ; or wandering, truant-like, by many a harvest-field and lone burn-brae ; of tricks they had played upon their tutor ; of depredations committed in the vineries and hot-houses ; and their awful fear of discovery, which was more than half the charm of the whole adventure ; of all their rides and rambles, their boyish hopes and mutual aspirations ; and now—*now* he was dead and buried, far, far away in an Indian grave, an old, shattered, fever-stricken man.

It seemed so difficult to think when he looked across the room to where hung a portrait of the little Willie of the vanished

years, a laughing and golden-haired boy; and Sir John muttered, with something between a sigh and a sob in his throat—

"Yes, Willie, I shall be a kind father to your orphan girl, whate'er betide!"

"Gwendoleyne is a pretty name," said Cyril, approvingly.

"I am so glad you like it," observed his mother, following her own ambitious thoughts.

"Rather romantic though. There is *one* I like that is more simple."

"Her mother was a Welsh lady—one of the Ap-Rhys of Llanhillwydd," added Lady Wedderburn, in an explanatory tone. "But she died, poor thing, at Madras, when Gwenny was about three years old, and I wonder that uncle William did not send her home to Europe long ago; but then she was his only child, and he would have missed her so much!"

As the conversation was now taking a domestic turn, and Sir John Wedderburn was evidently disturbed by the tidings—for, instead of his brother's death, his final return had been anticipated,—Chesters, who hated the dark or gloomy side of anything, thought he had better go, as he had only ridden over to see a horse of Cyril's; yet he lingered for a time, smoking a cigar with him and Robert on the terrace before the mansion, while Lady Wedderburn was engaged in family council with her husband.

CHAPTER II.

THE WILLOWDEAN.

THE manor house of Willowdean is situated in the Merse, which, with Lauderdale and Lammermuir, forms one of the three great subdivisions of Berwickshire, each of which possesses distinct natural features; but the former has been long celebrated in Scottish annals for its rich scenery, its industrious population, and plentiful harvests, while the sterner Lauderdale is bold and rugged, and Lammermuir is lone, bleak, and dreary, all purple morass or pastoral hill, being, in fact, a vast sheepwalk.

Built on the site of an old Bastile-house, that had many a time been burned or stormed, restored and stormed again, by English armies and Warden raiders in the times of old; lastly, when the Bandes Françaises under D'Esse d'Epainvilliers were in full retreat from Haddington during the wars of Mary of Lorraine, Willowdean we may describe as a handsome modern house, of aristocratic appearance, with a peristyle of eight Ionic pillars, in the pediment above which were the Wedderburn arms—a chevron between three mullets; while their motto—*Fortiter et recte*—was carved in large Roman letters on the frieze. The

rooms were lofty, the double drawing-room, when its folding doors were slid into the wall, forming a stately salon for dancing, when all its rich furniture was removed, and the Karl Harrgs, Fosters, and Gilberts, that adorned its walls, were alone left behind.

There was, of course, a noble billiard-room, where many a game was played by Cyril and Chesters, not always to the advantage of the former; and a great conservatory filled with the rarest exotics, where more than one graceful acacia drooped over statues and fountains, was lit at night with roses of gas made at the home farm.

The park had been under grass for centuries, if it was ever ploughed at all. Tradition said that Leslie's six thousand cavalry had grassed there a night or two before the battle of Philiphaugh; and there, as its vista stretched far away to where the purple Lammermuir bounded the distance, far beyond the invisible fence that marked its actual limits, the brown fallow deer might be seen in summer browsing or lying under the ancient oaks and beeches, half hidden among the green fern and pink foxglove; and that nothing might be wanting in effect, some stately peacocks spread their spotted plumage over the white balustrades of the terrace before the façade of the mansion, to which the gravelled carriage drive approached by a semicircular sweep on each side, through the smooth and velvet grass.

Every comfort were there, and every luxury—ice-pit, vineries and forcing-houses, stables and kennel—yet the means of the worthy Baronet were far from adequate to his expenses in this aspiring age, and in Willowdean, as in many a less pretentious dwelling, there was too often a struggle to “keep up appearances.”

Perhaps no part of the house was furnished more luxuriously and elegantly than Lady Wedderburn's boudoir, the hangings and furniture of which were blue satin and silver; but few objects there were more treasured than certain Burmese idols, three-headed gods, triple-trunked elephants, and other hideous little monsters, in bronze and ivory, which her beloved Cyril had picked up amid the “loot” at Moulmein, and brought home for “dear mamma,” when he was a boy ensign, in his first red coat.

And now for a little account of some of our *dramatis personæ*.

Captain Wedderburn, though a frank, honest, and good-hearted young fellow, was and ever had been a spoiled child of fortune. Pronounced by aunts and nurses “a love of an infant” when crowing and nestling in his silk berceauette, he had gone to Rugby a bold and beautiful schoolboy, and left college to join his regiment a dangerously handsome man. He

had been pretty successful in all the little undertakings of the gay life he led—the career of a soldier in the flirting times of peace. The horse he backed was pretty sure to win ; he could keep his wicket against the prime bowler of the garrison, and march off the field with his bat on his shoulder : he won the prize at every pigeon match, rode straight to hounds, pulled a capital stroke oar, and was deemed one of the best round-dancers in the Royal Fusileers. There was one thing he had *never* been able to do, viz., to beat his acquaintance Chesters at cards or billiards, “and thereby hangs a tale.” Few men among those distinguished Fusileers had been more petted, spoiled, fallen-in-love-with, or so lucky among the ladies as handsome Cyril Wedderburn, who became rather fastidious in consequence.

A prime hand he was in arranging picnics, or a social “spread” on the roof of a drag at race or review, and he affected to dabble in music too, for he had a fine voice, and many a mysterious air he had bribed the band-master to “fudge out of another,” and dedicate to some pretty girl about whom he dangled till the *route* came ; and it was his great—yet most ungrateful—boast, in mess-room parlance, that “no bit of white muslin had ever hooked him yet.”

There was one sweet, pale face, however—but of *that* anon.

His cousin and brother-officer, Horace Ramornie, though nearly as much petted and admired, was much less a man of pleasure than Cyril. He was by no means so showy an officer or so fashionable a man, yet he was a lad of very striking and interesting appearance, now in his twenty-second year ; slender, graceful, and gentle-mannered, with nearly regular features, and a skin of an olive tint ; yet with bat and foil he had held his own against the best at Sandhurst. He had wonderful dark hazel eyes, eyes that, as Cyril said, “were bright enough and soft enough for a girl, and were quite thrown away upon a fellow like Horace.”

The lad had been a hard student, for he knew—and had perhaps been taught to know from his boyhood—that he was dependent on the Wedderburn family for his commission, in the first place, and for his little yearly allowance in the second ; therefore, he was chiefly vain of having won a step in the regiment, that he was a lieutenant, and that three letters, *p.s.c.*, after his name in the Army List, showed that he had already passed his final examination at the Staff College, and was fit for any appointment the Commander-in-Chief might bestow upon him.

Though amid the expense which their household and Cyril's allowance—especially when on home service—entailed, together with Robert's prospects, Lady Wedderburn did sometimes

deem Horace somewhat of "a drag," she could not forget that he was her dead sister's only son; and as she doted on the tomes of Douglas, Burke, and Debrett, she was vain of his direct descent from an old, old Scottish line, that stretched far beyond the Wedderburns of the Merse into remote antiquity; for the lad was descended from fierce Sir John Ramornie, the audacious and implacable, the companion and false friend of the helpless Duke of Rothesay, whom, as history tells us, he seized near Strathtyrum, and starved to death in the Castle of St. Andrew's in 1402, and from Alexander de Ramorgny, who had a free gift of Pitglassie in Fife from Robert Duke of Albany, and so forth; so Horace, though only a subaltern in Her Majesty's service, enjoyed an historical name, one among the best of many of Scotland's "unlanded gentry," though Pitglassie and all had gone in recent bank failures, very little store he set thereon, as he walked to and fro on the terrace on that breezy March morning, enjoying a pipe of Cavendish and listening to Chesters, who was descanting most fluently on the merits of certain horses and dogs, and on certain races that were on the *tapis*, but descanting in vain, for Horace was not a betting man.

Ralph Rooke Chesters, of Chesterhaugh, a neighbouring proprietor, whose lands were deeply dipped in debt, enjoyed the local rank of Captain, having once been a cornet in a cavalry corps, which he had left "somehow under a cloud," as the phrase went. He was not without a certain amount of good looks, and had undoubtedly a gentlemanly exterior. Yet he was a *blasé* man, of some forty or five-and-forty years, who had seen and known a vast deal of the world ere half that time was past. His nose was very red, his cheeks were blotchy, and his sandy-coloured hair was already thickly seamed with grey. There was a perpetual sinister and watchful expression in his pale grey eyes, and usually a compression about his thin cruel lips, the secret workings of which his sandy moustache, luckily for himself, concealed.

On this morning he wore a rough suit of heather-coloured tweed, with leather gaiters and baggy knickerbockers, a round jacket, scarlet shirt, and Glengarry bonnet, the vile composite costume of the fast Scotchman "of the period" whose limbs will not pass muster in the kilt; and on the left side of the said Glengarry he wore a huge and pretentious silver badge, the crest of the Chesters (a tower), to whose line he certainly was no ornament; and Cyril Wedderburn, who was very fastidious in his own toilette, disliked this style of dress intensely, and even when shooting or fishing never adopted it.

His new horse—a fine bay hunter, with dark legs—had fully met Chesters' approval. The stables, the dog-kennel, and the

loose box had been duly visited ; they had tried a stroke or two in the billiard-room, with a glass of Madeira and a biscuit, ere the Captain again announced his intention of going.

"I daresay, Wedderburn," said he, "you must feel it a thundering bore, this death of an old uncle you scarcely ever saw ? It will spoil all your fun, having to play propriety here till your leave is up."

Cyril, like Robert, was perhaps thinking so, but had not the coarseness to put his thoughts in words.

"Uncle William was my father's favourite brother," said he, evasively.

"Order my horse, Asloane," said Chesters, as the butler was leaving the billiard-room with the salver and decanters.

"Are you going already ?" asked Cyril, in a tone of equal indifference and politeness.

"Yes, if you will allow me. I am rather *de trop* here—family grief, house of mourning, and all that sort of thing," said Chesters, smiling as much as he ever smiled ; "but perhaps you will look me up at Chesterhaugh to-morrow, and pot with me at six, and then we'll have a little mild play ; not extravagant, remember ; only guinea points."

"All right, I'll be there ; thanks," replied Cyril, but in a tone of more indifference than cordiality.

Cyril Wedderburn courteously accompanied Chesters to the nearest gate-lodge on the verge of the park, and then he galloped off.

"That is not the way to Chesterhaugh," said Cyril to the lodgekeeper.

"No, Maister Cyril," replied that official, with a leer ; "but the Captain gangs as often by the road that leads to Lonewoodlee."

This man did not speak unthinkingly, for his tone and manner made the brow of Cyril contract, and he felt his cheek flush with anger, for the inference to be drawn from those simple words was far from being a pleasant one to him.

"Chesters at Lonewoodlee ! By Heaven, I must look to this !" he muttered, as he turned and walked slowly back to the house.

CHAPTER III.

LADY WEDDERBURN'S HOPE.

DINNER at Willowdean, even when only the family were present, was rather a stately and cumbersome meal ; yet Cyril and Horace, accustomed latterly to the splendour and glitter of

the regimental mess, perhaps liked that it should be so. A service of plate covered the great walnut-wood sideboard. The damask cloths, the elaborately cut crystal, the blue and gold china with the Wedderburn arms—crest, an eagle in full flight, with the motto, *Fortiter et recte*—which figured on everything from the ice-pails to the salt-spoons, all betokened taste, luxury, and moderate wealth ; while candelabra lit with gas shed a flood of brilliant light over all. Save a few feet of polished wainscot round the room, the floor was entirely covered by a rich deep Turkey carpet. Long and narrow, the apartment had four lofty windows at the end ; these opened towards the Lammermuir Hills, but were now, at six P.M. in the month of March, shrouded by heavy maroon-coloured hangings with broad gold binding.

The three servants in attendance were each a perfect "Jeames" of the most approved order, so far as calves, whiskers, and livery went ; for the traditional good old-fashioned servants who lived and died in their master's household, and were as hereditary as the family pictures and plate, like many other Scottish things of the best kind, exist only in romance, and are gone with the past.

The party which assembled at table when Asloane rang the house-bell at six, was of course somewhat reserved and taciturn for a time. They conversed but little, or in low tones, till the cloth was removed, and that little ran chiefly on the weather, or consisted of the courtesies of the table, till Mr. Asloane had placed the elaborately cut decanters in a row before his master, bowed, and withdrawn.

Sir John, though grave and even sad in expression, had already been able to think calmly over his "poor brother's" death, in conjunction with certain long projected improvements on the property—more particularly the erection of a new wing to the stable-court, and a central clock tower ; and yet ever and anon he would come forth with some fond or kind reminiscence of Willie, for he seemed at times to live in the past, and could scarcely realize the idea that he had died an elderly man at last.

Cyril's thoughts rose chiefly upon what the gatekeeper had said so casually ; thus he was taciturn, almost morose, and fidgeted with his cuffs and studs or whiskers, viciously cracking walnuts as if in the shell of each he crushed an enemy.

His brother Robert was probably thinking that if their uncle William had left *him* something out of his lacs of rupees, he might have cut the Bar, for which he had no great fancy, and betaken himself to the profession of a man of pleasure ; while young Horace Lamornie had no thoughts of the matter, for he was the least considered in that small family circle, and

so made, perhaps, a more substantial dinner than any of them.

Lady Wedderburn, (*née* Katharine Douglas, daughter of a poor but ancient family in one of the Wards in Lanarkshire) was no longer young ; she was past the prime even of middle age, but still had great remains of beauty. Her cast of features and the brilliance of her dark grey eyes were unchanged, though wrinkles had taken the place of dimples, and her once black hair was streaked with silvery white.

Her small and lady-like hands showed the minute wrinkles and blue veins of time ; yet they were well-shaped and beautiful hands still ; and though she had several rings on them, fully a half of these were black enamel and pearls—the rings in memory of friends and relations she had survived.

The great remains which she possessed of a high class of beauty rendered her still pleasing, and Cyril, a very fastidious connoisseur in fine faces, always admired his mother's more than that of any other woman. She was his model, yet men rarely fall in love with their imaginary models. Her dresses were always rich, the colours well chosen, and in fashion adapted to her years, for she had the art which so few possess—that of growing gracefully old. A fall of rich white lace pinned prettily over her stately head fell with lappets at each side, finishing a coquettish demi-toilette that somehow became her matronly character.

"Pass the wine, Cyril ; you are very silent," said Sir John ; "and let us drink kindly to the memory of your poor uncle Willie."

"My dear Sir John," said Lady Wedderburn, still pursuing her own secret thoughts, after this little ceremony was over, "on again looking over our dear William's will, I observed that his property is conveyed away to certain trustees, of whom *you* are the chief, for the behoof of that darling child Gwenny, whom I already begin to love—quite as a daughter, indeed."

A grave kind of smile spread over Sir John's face, and Cyril, after a swift but furtive glance at his mother, proceeded to crack more nuts ; but no one replied.

"I do so long to see her," resumed Lady Wedderburn, toying the while with some grapes, her head pensively on one side, and her eyes cast down. "If like her mother, she will be a very beautiful girl, Cyril."

"Indeed—I never saw her mother," replied Cyril, with provoking indifference, as he played with his long whiskers.

"I don't think there were many girls who in the bloom of their twentieth year surpassed Gwendoleyne Ap-Rhys !" observed his mother, emphatically.

"Pass the port, Horace," said Cyril ; "that Madeira is like

our mess tap, rather heady, but makes a capital 'whitewasher, however."

"Makes a what?" asked Lady Wedderburn, with a tone of pique. "But a girl with three hundred thousand pounds will prove a serious responsibility to us."

"Get her married offhand," said Robert, bluntly.

"That is the very kind of marriage to be guarded against," replied his mother. "Thus we must be careful whom we introduce to her. She will prove a great comfort to us, however, Wedderburn, when the dear boys are back to their regiment and Robert is at College."

"I quite concur with you, Katharine, about the introductions," said Sir John. "One thing is clear, that after Cyril goes I shall not have that person Chesters coming about Willowdean."

"He is no particular friend of mine," retorted Cyril, almost haughtily, while he coloured with annoyance. "I only met him at the Lothian Racing Club: he knew Probyn and other fellows of ours, and so we came to talk of horses, and turn a card or two, that is all."

"A card or two to your loss, as I am aware; but he is a bad style of man, and not the kind of companion I wish you or Horace to make."

"My dear papa," replied Cyril, who, when in his father's presence, never forgot the influences of boyhood, "after a fellow has been eight years in the line, been round the Sand Heads at the mouth of the Hooghly, and marched all through Central India, if he can't take care of himself, he never will."

"I know that Chesters got into a scrape in his regiment, and then into the hands of the 'Chosen People,'" said Horace, laughing.

"An easy matter to do so," added Sir John. "Chester-haugh, with its rents, won't stand a stud of horses, a pack of harriers, a yacht on the Clyde——"

"Besides a French *danseuse*," interrupted Cyril, under his breath and with a swift glance at his cousin.

"He rooked that young French officer who was travelling here," said Sir John—"what was his name?"

"The Captain De la Fosse," said Miss M'Caw, softly, for the flatteries of the Frenchman were still deep and soft in her memory, when he spent a week at Willowdean.

"Thank you—yes, De la Fosse. He rooked him so completely that, but for my assistance, he would have had serious difficulty in getting home to France."

"Ah, well: don't let him marry cousin Gwenny," said Cyril, once more applying himself to the port. "But here is a chance

for you young fellows, Bob and Horace. Why don't you toss up for who is to enter stakes for the heiress?"

"Fie, Cyril! How can you talk thus—how make a jest so unseemly at such a time—of your own cousin too?" exclaimed Lady Wedderburn, with heightened colour and unusual asperity of tone.

"Why, mother dearest——" began Cyril, with surprise.

"You might give yourself the preference."

"The right of the first-born," added Robert, sententiously.

"Nay, nay, I am not a marrying man. What the deuce should I do with a wife, when the regiment has got its 'Letters of Readiness,' too?" asked Cyril, again having recourse to the nuts, with a gloom in his dark blue eyes.

"Or Horace either, if it comes to that," said Lady Wedderburn, a little pointedly. "But under all the circumstances, I do not see why you should now go to the East at all, Cyril."

"Why *now* more than yesterday?" asked Cyril, who seemed to be in a cynical mood of mind. "I daresay you think me far too fine and handsome a fellow to be shot or bayoneted by some filthy Russian linesman, and then flung into a hole or a trench by the wayside, as better men have been."

"Oh, Cyril, what a horrible idea!" exclaimed his mother, while tears started to her eyes; "but there is our neighbour, Lady Juliana Ernescleugh, on the first rumour of war she had her son, the Master, transferred to the Scots Fusileer Guards, and I don't see why I should be worse treated than she is."

Cyril and Horace laughed on hearing this, and the former said, contemptuously—

"I do not think Lady Juliana made much by that move, as the Brigade of Guards are also under orders for European Turkey."

"At all events, when Gwenny comes home—for this house is of course her home, Sir John being her nearest kinsman and chief trustee—I trust that you two boys will do all in your power to soothe and console her after the terrible loss and affliction she has undergone."

Horace Raniornie coloured, for he felt himself omitted in this charge; but then she was no relation of his.

"Of course," replied Cyril, who, after a pause, began now for the first time to perceive how the current of these remarks tended; "but our time for all that sort of thing—at least, mine and Horace's—will be short, and a telegram from the Colonel may whisk us off by the first train at any moment. Gwenny—Gwendoleyne—the name is pretty enough, smacks of Mudie's, and the novel in three volumes octavo—we must leave the care and the reversion of her to you, Bob."

"She won't have any tinge of colour about her, I hope?" said that personage, simply.

"What a griff you are! Come out for the Scotch Bar; you would certainly shine there, Bob, if nowhere else," said Cyril.

"Well, a Welsh girl," persisted Bob, who was at the age when most young men are flippant; "she'll have black eyes, of course, with the proverbial cheek bones of the Celt and the Cymri—a high-crowned hat, and a scarlet handkerchief."

"A nice costume to wear at the Choultry, when the thermometer is at 108° in the shade. Bob, you are the veriest griff I have met since I left Chowringee."

"I am getting utterly provoked by this tone and the tenor of these remarks. Really the young men of the present day are becoming quite insufferable!" said Lady Wedderburn, actually darting an angry glance at poor Horace, who had scarcely spoken. "Cyril, and you especially Robert, seem to forget that her mother was a lady of one of the best families in Wales, and that her father was your uncle."

"Yes," added Sir John, stiffly; "Ap-Rhys of Llanichillwydd, is a name second to none in the annals of the old Principality."

"Then, papa," continued Bob, "when Gwenny comes home, we'll all have to go in for Burke, Debrett, and pedigree?"

"Reared in India, and away from all home influences, the girl will too probably place such things at their true value," said Cyril, still more unwittingly shocking his aristocratic mother; "though of course she may, if she please, go far beyond the Wedderburns up to the first Prince of Wales, or Howel Dha, at least."

"Come, come; no quizzing," said Sir John, a little severely. "Remember that she is an orphan."

"And so rich," added Lady Wedderburn, plaintively. "Miss M'Caw," she continued, with a bow understood by that lady, who, when no other was present, always sat on Sir John's right hand; and then the four gentlemen rose as ceremoniously as if they were all strangers, while she retired to the drawing-room with her companion.

The latter, who had been pretty when young, was now well past her fortieth year, and having a pedigree—as what Highlander has not?—she had sighed with secret impatience and envy, perhaps bitterness, while listening to much that we have recorded; for she too, as well as the heiress, had come of an old Celtic line that had furnished its patriotic victims for the field and scaffold; and among her private *lares* she treasured an old locket of red gold, containing a lock of "the Prince's" golden hair, given by his own hand, on the retreat from Derby, to her great grandsire, the great M'Caw of the '45, who died like a hero in the human shambles at Carlisle.

She had resided some ten years of an aimless and hopeless life at Willowdean, and had not been without secret thoughts on one or two occasions of entangling Cyril in a matrimonial affair ; but he had seen too much of the world even as a boy, and was daily seeing too many fresh young faces to be caught so easily—so all such hopes were past and vanished now.

She was a calm, quiet person, who, under a tolerably ladylike exterior, concealed much of that discontented pride, fawning, and subservience, which are too often the leading characteristics of the modern Celt.

"I do beg that you will not consider Ralph Chesters as in any way a friend of mine," said Cyril, resuming a thread of the past conversation, after his brother and Horace had betaken them to the billiard-room ; "for I fully agree with you that he is not the style of man to meet ladies."

"Especially one who is such a monetary prize as your cousin," said Sir John, pointedly.

"But he talks of going to the army of the East."

"In what capacity?"

"An officer of the Bashi Bozooks, or some such distinguished force," said Cyril, with a hearty fit of laughter.

"And a good riddance his absence will prove to the Merse," added Sir John, as he rose to join Lady Wedderburn, leaving Cyril to smoke on the terrace, where he walked to and fro in the clear cold starlight, with his eyes fixed on a dark spot that was barely distinguishable on the hill side, two or three miles off. It was a dense grove of trees, which seemed to have a peculiar attraction for him, and its outline became more distinct when the moon arose.

"Have you been talking to Cyril?" asked the lady, as her husband entered her boudoir, and, not without some doubt and hesitation, deposited his burly person in his rough tweed suit on one of her blue and silver *fauteuils*.

"Yes," said he, rubbing his forehead with an air of perplexity.

"Seriously, I hope?"

"About Chesters—oh, yes."

"Tush ! I mean about Gwendoleyne."

"No ; but it seems to me that you are already—even on the first day our melancholy news has come—disposed to press your views and wishes too plainly upon Cyril."

"How so?" asked Lady Wedderburn, curtly.

"In the choice of a wife, most men like to please themselves, not other persons."

"But surely, Wedderburn, you would wish to see this alliance brought about?" said she earnestly.

"Undoubtedly ; but Cyril is just the style of young fellow

to run rusty—to kick over the traces—if worried about the matter. I know that I should have done so.”

“He can have no previous attachment, for never a letter comes here, save from some of his regimental friends, and Horace and Robert see them all.”

“But, my dear Katharine,” urged Sir John, gently, as he stirred his cup of coffee, “we must consider also the girl’s inclinations, her tastes, her sympathies.”

“What right has she to have any at her years? I am sure I had none!”

“Complimentary, Kate, for you were just about her age when you married *me*.”

“Ah, but that was a very different thing. I did not possess three hundred thousand pounds.”

“You possessed much that had far more value in the eyes of John Wedderburn,” said the old gentleman, as he stooped, kissed her upturned forehead gallantly, and to end this matter, went forth to have a look at his horses, and think over the proposed additions to the already magnificent stable-court.

CHAPTER IV.

LONEWOODLEE.

WITHIN a few miles of this splendid and luxurious modern mansion a very different scene was passing in another dwelling.

In a bleaker part of the Merse, more immediately adjoining the Lammermuir range of hills, was situated the house of Lone-woodlee, a fine example of what a Scottish fortalice required to be in the troublesome times of the sixteenth century. “It grotesquely associated with its rude strength the fantastic ornaments of a more powerful and civilized people—a type of what the French alliance must often have produced among the gentlemen of the age—the rugged nature of the Scot, with the style and manners of the mercurial Frank.”

It was a small square tower, with round corbelled turrets at the angles; but as it has changed hands since then, and been strangely modernized within the last three years, the reader may look for it in vain as we shall describe it.

Numerous loopholes, designed for arrows or arquebuses, were in the angles of these four turrets, in the sills of the windows, and round the floridly carved entrance-door, over which were the arms of the family, with the legend in quaint letters, in bold relief—

*“Yis touw finished be Oliver Levenox, 15th Aprile, 1560, is
ovr inheritance.”*

It was grey, gaunt, lichen spotted, and solitary, and was surrounded by a grove of ancient trees on the pastoral slope, from whence it took its most characteristic name of the Lonewoodlee. It was more immediately girt by a massive wall, which had once been for defence, but was ruinous now, for the long-tufted grass and fragrant wall-flower flourished along its cope, and the iron gate had long since fallen from its hinges, while the proud court was almost covered by the grass that sprung up between the stones.

Even prior to the period of which we write, some fifteen years ago, an attempt had been made to modernize the tower a little, by removing the rusted iron gratings from the windows and enlarging them; but still the dwelling was gloomy, in consequence of the enormous thickness of the walls and the vaultings of the lower basement.

Among the wood around it were many trees that had sprung from seedlings of the ancient ash, which, by the law of an early Scottish king, every man who built even a cottage was bound to plant near his dwelling for shafts, when the "spear, six Scottish ells in length," was required to bear back alike the Norman knights and Saxon infantry of England.

Many a gloomy old Border legend was connected with the Tower of Lonewoodlee, and like some other ancient families, the proprietors had their warning when fate was nigh—an unpleasant, however romantic, adjunct; for it was said that when a Lennox was to die, as the moon rose above a certain quarter of the Lammermuir hills, the shadow of a large human hand—the hand of destiny—was cast on the eastern wall, with the forefinger pointed at length; and the local papers actually asserted that such a shadow was visible before Major Lennox was killed at the battle of Waterloo.

Within all was gloomy, dilapidated, and darkened by time; the furniture was full forty years old, and some of it was still older.

In the dining-room, or hall, the sofas were square-elbowed, of horsehair, and furnished with back-squabs; the chairs were of dark blue leather, and in the corners were circular stands for curious china, large shells, and so forth. With cotton furniture, or coloured calico, a meagre attempt had been made by a neat female hand to render gay the apartment that passed as a drawing-room, where the chiffonnières of wood, painted white and gilded, the white marble girandoles (minus half their crystal pendants), and everything else, were old-fashioned, shabby, and worn, for they had been the new furnishing of the mansion when George III. was King, and the mother of the present proprietor had come home a blooming bride.

Here and there, in oval frames, or bordered only by black oak mouldings, were portraits of a far older period than any of the Georges, as the black wigs and breastplates of the subjects evinced. Every way it was an old and worn-out establishment, where everything looked mouldy and fading away.

On the same March evening when the maroon-coloured curtains were drawn at Willowdean, and the pompous old butler was placing the row of glittering decanters before Sir John Wedderburn, an old man was seated in a high-backed leather chair, which was studded with rows of brass-headed nails, seeking to warm his limbs at the fire, which blazed cheerily enough in the great stone chimney of the dining-hall at Lonewoodlee. The grate was old-fashioned, like everything else there; it was a mere iron basket, adorned with four brass knobs, and placed upon two square stones, quite unsuited to the form of the fireplace. Thus the heat of the roaring pile of coals, turf, and bog-oak roots, went all up the great tunnel-like vent, with a column of sparks.

Oliver Lennox of Lonewoodlee looked much older than his years warranted, for his wasted figure, clad in a well-worn Indian dressing-gown, or *robe-de-chambre* of the shawl pattern, tied by a cord and tattered tassel, was bent severely, and his face was furrowed by disease and the emotions of the mind, rather than time, for he was not more, perhaps, than fifty-five years of age.

His right elbow rested on the arm of his chair; his chin was placed in the hollow of his hand, and his keen, restless, yet clear blue eyes were fixed dreamily on the ruddy flame that lighted up his sharp aquiline features, and turned to threads of glittering silver his thin white hair that had once been a rich dark brown.

Seated on a tabouret or little stool by his side, was his daughter Mary, a girl not quite of twenty years; perhaps the only true friend whom many reverses of fortune left him; his sole attendant, save a couple of female domestics; others seldom remained long at the Tower, as a querulous master and a gloomy house, which had moreover the steady reputation of being haunted, rendered service unattractive at Lonewoodlee.

Mary knew he was dying of some internal and mysterious disease with which the doctors had totally failed to grapple—that, in spite of her affection and their skill, of her prayers and their potions, he was slowly and surely passing away from her; and she left nothing unsaid or undone to soothe, by sweet devotedness, what she knew to be too probably the few months of his last year on earth.

He had survived the winter, but might never live to see the

summer ripen into autumn, and the golden corn waving on the upland slopes that were his own no more.

To God and herself alone were known the terrible thoughts of Mary Lennox in the long, sleepless hours of the weary nights she passed ; yet unswerving in her filial duty, tenderly nursing and ministering as only a woman—only a daughter or wife—can nurse or minister to the wants of a querulous patient ; springing from her pillow with cheerful and affectionate alacrity, to anticipate his every wish, and smiling to hide the sorrow that preyed upon her own heart.

Pale and sad usually, her face was beautiful ; yet sadness had not been its normal expression, but rather the result of local influence. Her features were not quite regular, but there was a divine delicacy about them : her finely lidded eyes were of that blue-grey which is aptly termed violet colour, and her mouth and chin were beautifully formed, as were her tiny ears and hands. Her whole figure, which was *petite* rather, and the contour of her head, with its masses of rich brown hair, were eminently lady-like and indicative of high breeding and tender culture ; and a charming picture she would have formed, as she sat then, with her father's passive left hand locked caressingly in hers, and her soft little face upturned to his, every feature teeming with affectionate solicitude.

Her dress was plain, inexpensive, and simple, for their means could not afford her many luxuries ; but her starched cuffs and collar—made and dressed by her own hands—and the tiny velvet riband around her slender white neck, made it quite a pretty toilette, while, save an old ring or two that had been her mother's, she was destitute of ornament ; and there the father and daughter sat long in silence, while the blustering March wind souged in the old wood without, and the flood of red and wavering light from the capacious fireplace fell upon their faces, and fitfully too upon the portraits of those ancestors, who, if their exchequer had been as low as that of Oliver Lennox, would have chosen just such a moonless night for a quiet ride among the beeves on the southern side of the Border.

Oliver Lennox had once been a man of considerable influence in the Merse, and had even contrived to shine, for a short season, in London society. But deep play, some unlucky bets at Newmarket, one or two vexed law pleas with Sir John Wedderburn, in which he had been nonsuited with great loss, domestic cares of many kinds, particularly the deaths of his wife and several children, all combined to break him down in health and spirit.

Much of his land had gone, piecemeal, to satisfy the creditors his London career had raised around him, and now the little that remained of Lonewoodlee was mortgaged to the utmost ;

and having but a bare annuity, he knew too surely that when he died there would be neither home nor shelter for his Mary.

He was a proud, fiery, and irritable man, who would brook neither the pity of his friends nor the scorn of his enemies ; and the knowledge that his only child—his gentle and delicate daughter—would be left to the mercy of the world, or to support herself by the accomplishments she possessed, maddened him, so that there were times when his mind wandered, and *then* it was that the soul of Mary Lennox seemed to die within her with sorrow and terror !

"Shall I play to you, dear papa?" said she softly.

There was a wonderful chord in Mary's voice that made it very seductive, but she had to repeat the offer three times before the sense of it fell upon his drowsy ear.

CHAPTER V.

MARY LENNOX.

'SHALL I play to you, dear papa?' she repeated for the third time.

"No, Mary, no," said he, peevishly. "Your piano, child, is in that shabby chintz-covered den you call a drawing-room."

"Oh, papa! what served poor mamma may very well do for me."

"And I fear we can't afford a fire there as well as *here*."

"But if I keep the doors open you could hear me. The cold is not great to-night," she urged.

"No—no, child, thank you ; but I wish to think."

"To-morrow, papa, I shall have my poor old piano brought here, and then I shall play to you some of the airs you love so well."

"Pet Mary—but music makes me sad."

"But it soothes you too, papa."

"Your voice, my darling, would soothe anything, even the rage of a lion," said he, as he drew her head upon his knee and held it caressing there between his tremulous hands ; "but it sounds so much like your mother's, that—that—even while I love to listen my heart grows sad and sick within me ! Music possesses such vast power, especially over a shattered nervous system, and more than anything else can conjure back the past, the lost, and the dead ! But," he added, suddenly, with a louder tone and a strange gleam in his eye, "where is your brother Harry ; why is he not here to-night?"

Then a kind of wail escaped the lips of poor Mary, and the

tears started to her eyes, for she knew that his mind was wandering again.

"Oh, papa!" she moaned, and looked at him imploringly.

"Where is he?" demanded Mr. Lennox, impetuously, and his eyes flashed in the red light of the fire; then he struck his hand upon his brow as a gleam of memory came to his aid, and he said, in a choking voice, "I forgot myself! God help me—God help me! True, Mary—true; my boy is lying in his Indian grave, far, far away, where the bones of the Briton and Sikh lie thick on the battle-field. But you must remember the night I saw him here—here, in this very room!"

"I was but a child of eight years when poor Harry died."

"Yes; and when I saw him."

"Oh, papa, that is a wild idea; as absurd as—as ——"

"What, girl?"

"The shadowy hand."

"It is not so, and it was not so! It is not impossible, Mary, when death, more especially a violent one, strikes at a distance one who is dear to us—dear as your brother Harry was to me—that some intuition, some mysterious presentiment announces the event. How often have I told you that as I sat here in the twilight of evening in this chair, and on this very spot, reading the Gazette of the killed and wounded on that disastrous Indian field, some secret impulse made me glance towards the end of the room, and there I saw the figure, the form, the face of your brother, regarding me mournfully and tenderly for a moment, and then all faded away. I was terror-struck, but deemed it fancy! Again I turned to the fatal Gazette, and the *next name* that caught my eye among the killed—the killed in action—was that of my own boy, Harry Lennox!"

"Hush, papa, oh hush!" said Mary, looking round anxiously; for it was this story to which her father was fond of referring from time to time, that had won the Tower, among the vulgar, the reputation of being haunted, so that domestics were terrified to remain, though the place was within a mile or two of the rail to Berwick.

After a long pause he drew a deep breath and spoke again.

"Did I not hear, or was it a dream—for I have strange dreams sometimes—that Wedderburn's son buried him—buried my boy?" said he, in a tremulous voice.

"Yes, papa," said Mary, eagerly; "Cyril Wedderburn buried poor Harry, and stood by his grave in that distant land. He did more, papa: he cut off a lock of his hair for—for you."

"I could bless him for that, but for his father's sake. I hate that elder Wedderburn. I hate his flaunting wife," he continued, raising his voice and his clenched hand. "I hate the whole brood of them, and shall never cease to curse——"

"Oh, dearest papa, do not—do not speak thus!" cried Mary, imploringly, as she placed a hand upon his mouth, and saw with growing terror the fire, as if of incipient insanity, flashing in his eyes.

The paroxysm of rage into which he lashed himself when he thought of his lost lawsuits, especially one in which Sir John Wedderburn asserted and made good his right of pasturage upon a certain part of the Lee, which the Lennox family had claimed as theirs alone for several generations, weakened him so much that Mary was glad to give him a soothing draught, and get him to his bedroom for the night.

After this he became more seriously ill, and there were more frequent aberrations of intellect. Sometimes he imagined himself in the hunting-field, and then he would shout in a quavering and childish treble—

"Tally ho! tally ho! Hallo, my Lord Wemyss, what's up at the high fence yonder? By Jove, John Wedderburn's brown mare is at fault—her off forefoot is caught in the wires—and over they go, nag and rider! I hope the young scoundrel's neck is broke at least!"

And Mary wept as she heard the fierce wish, which referred to some sporting adventure years ago, when her father and Sir John were much younger men, but seemingly no better friends.

Next night she had her piano moved close to the drawing-room door, so that she might play to him as he lay abed in his own room. She had a magnificent voice, and it had been highly cultivated. She exerted herself to the utmost to please, and played and sang him to sleep, as one might do a fretful child. Then when she was assured that his slumber was sound, she kissed him softly, assumed her hat and veil, her cloak and muff, and hastened from the Tower and its desolate court, to where some one she well knew was awaiting her, at an angle of the wood—but in this we are somewhat anticipating our story.

Two or three dreary days and nights followed his last outburst of mental fury, and a certain revulsion of spirit and corresponding bodily weakness followed it. Then he became more calm and coherent, after some opiates had been administered by his medical attendant, the young parish doctor, whom the charm of Mary's presence rather than her father's necessity, rendered a pretty regular visitor at Lonewoodlee; but in the hours of her tearful watching, the querulous old man unwittingly stuck many a barb in his daughter's heart.

"I feel weaker every day, Mary dear. I won't be long a burden or a trouble to you," he would say; "for something whispers to me that I cannot last long now. Old and weak—old and weak—half blind and well-nigh toothless!"

"Papa," said she, imploringly, "do not talk thus! You are not yet sixty years of age."

"I know, darling; but the poor human machine is worn out for all that. Look at Wedderburn! How hale and strong he is, for fortune has ever favoured him and his family, child; while with me—with me—oh, how is it with me? Ah, truly says Ossian, that 'age is dark and unlovely, and that the race of men are like the leaves of woody Morven; they pass away in the rustling blast, and other leaves lift their green heads on high.' So—so shall I soon pass away, Mary; but dearest you are weary?"

"I am not, papa," sighed the girl.

"Your eyes are red and dim. To bed, Mary—to bed. Place the sleeping draught at hand, then kiss me and leave me. Good night."

Then she would slip away to her room, the door of which was always left ajar, so that no sound might elude her ear in the night; and she would pray and sigh herself to sleep.

A day came anon when her father was too weak to leave his bed, and from thenceforward he became more than ever a confirmed invalid.

The sturdy but shambling old shooting pony, on whose broad back he had been latterly able to take a little exercise by a trot to Polwarth or Prestonhaugh, enjoyed a complete holiday; and time, as marked by the old-fashioned repeater at Mr. Lennox's bed-head, passed slowly indeed!

And as he lay there, day after day, and too often night after night, wakeful, and filled with keen and anxious thoughts, he strove to picture—to fashion out—the future of that lonely daughter whose life was, he hoped, to extend far beyond his own. He had plenty of time for this profitless employment, for, save Captain Chesters or perhaps the parish clergyman, no one ever dropped in to talk with or enliven him now, for his ailments and complaints against friends and fortune, his whims and fancies, rendered his society unpalatable to all save poor Mary.

There was no rousing him to take an interest in anything; and news of the coming war fell dull upon his ear. In vain did Mary read to him of our preparations for the Crimean war; that already the Russians and Turks had come to blows, and the former been defeated at Oltenitza, with the loss of three thousand seven hundred killed and wounded; that a Turkish squadron had been destroyed by the Russians, and the town cruelly bombarded; and that the British fleet, under Sir Charles Napier, had sailed for the Baltic from Spithead; that the destruction of Cronstadt was confidently expected, and so forth.

Oliver Lennox deemed the worthy minister an utter bore, and viewed his attempts to soothe or console him as simply impertinence, which his proud and fiery spirit resented.

Of Chesters he felt doubtful, and knew enough of the world to fear such a visitor and such a friend for his unprotected daughter. He knew his own debts and difficulties, his own poverty, and that the annuity he possessed would die with himself, and then what would be left for her—work—starvation—death!

It was horrible to lie there—helpless, fettered hand and foot as it were, weak, powerless, and inert, weaving such dark, bitter, and distracting fancies! He writhed and wept on his pillow, and muttering, “Mary—Mary! my daughter—my daughter!” would press his thin wan hands on his burning breast, as if to stifle thoughts that would not be stifled.

“I have been rash, wasteful, and unfortunate,” he would often say, “but what have you done, my poor Mary, that you should be stripped of your inheritance? for this Tower, built by Oliver Lennox, and all the land around it, even to the Whitadder, form your inheritance; but it must pass away to others—others—oh, my God! while such people as those Wedderburns live on, surrounded by every earthly blessing!”

“Calm yourself, papa,” said the hopeless girl, in a choking voice; “all may yet be well. Your health will revive with the warmth of spring.”

“The spring grass will be sprouting on the sod that wraps me, Mary; and there I would lie in peace could I but see your future child—if God would only in His kindness lift the veil that hides it from me! But, from the land of shadows, perhaps I may so see it—I may see it, and be a guide and a watch over you.”

Though Mary heard much of this querulous grief, she never became accustomed to it; but seemed always to suffer the agony of his death by anticipation when he spoke thus.

“Fear not, papa, fear not for me,” she was wont to reply, while caressing his head on her bosom. “If I lose you, I must trust then to God only.”

“To God and yourself, darling; but there are times when I think with fear that—that——”

“What, papa?”

“That Ralph Chesters seems to love you.”

Mary trembled and grew pale as she said—

“Do not speak of this again, I implore you, dearest papa.”

“I am glad you don’t like him; but what brings him here so often!”

“To see you, of course, papa,” said Mary, as her pale cheek reddened.

"An old man sick and ailing! I don't believe it; but **when** was he here last?"

"Three days ago."

"Did you see him?"

"No; when alone with him, his presence becomes intolerable to me."

"Why—how?" asked Lennox, eagerly, and half-raising himself in his bed.

"There is an expression in his eye I do not like; moreover, I never leave your room save when you are asleep."

"Thanks, my darling; that is kind and good; but beware of Chesters, for he is a dog that bites but does not bark."

"Have no fear for me so far as *he* is concerned," said Mary, emphatically.

"It is well. Kiss me, child, and then I shall try to sleep."

The girl kissed him tenderly, restraining her tears as she did. Then with tremulous gentleness, her pretty, small hands adjusted the pillow and coverlet, ere she glided noiselessly away.

Often had Mary pictured—for she was a sensitive creature and full of imagination—how utter her helplessness and loneliness would be when her father was gone; and notwithstanding all the love which *another* had succeeded in kindling in her heart, she longed and prayed that in the hour her father was taken, she might be taken too!

CHAPTER VI.

TWO LOVERS.

"**BEEN** fishing to-day, Cyril?" asked Robert Wedderburn, with a quizzical expression in his face, as his brother assumed his hat, gloves, and whip in the hall prior to riding out.

"No," replied Cyril, curtly, and colouring with some reason, as he had gone forth for four consecutive days with his rod, and returned with his basket empty: the fishing was merely a pretext to be alone, for he would have been clever indeed to have found trout or perch on the upland slopes of the Lammermuir, where Horace and Robert had seen him, while shooting hares and rabbits near Lonewoodlee. "I dine with Chesters to-day," he added.

"You go betimes?" said Robert, suspiciously.

"I want to give my new bay nag a breather—to have a few miles' gallop ere I go to Chesterhaugh," replied Cyril, as he rode off.

It was one of those dull March evenings when the sun sets

at six o'clock, as Captain Wedderburn dashed on at a rapid pace towards Lonewoodlee. The more fertile part of the Merse was soon left behind, and after a ride of three or four miles among heathy and grassy slopes, striped here and there with bright green where the track of the Lammas floods had run towards the Leader or the Whitadder rivers, he saw the old grey Tower, whose four round turrets, cope-house, and chimneys stood clearly defined against the evening sky, overtopping even the ancient timber that grew around it.

Thatched cottages with whitewashed walls, and the ruddy firelight glowing through their small square windows; hedges that were in process of being lopped and trimmed; gardens where the fragrant earth had been newly turned up, and where tufts of the white snowdrop and rows of the yellow crocus or purple violets were appearing, had all gradually vanished, and Cyril found himself amid a voiceless and pastoral solitude, dotted only by black-faced sheep, or huge round boulder-stones, and where here and there a sable gled or raven hung aloft in mid air—a black speck amid the amber glory of the twilight sky—as if on the outlook for the dead wedder or other carrion that might be lying in some moss-hole or mountain burn.

“By Jove, this place is well named the Lonewoodlee, for it could not well be lonelier!” thought Cyril, as he rode into the thicket of trees. There was no obstruction, for the enclosure or boundary, once a dry stone dyke, had fallen down, and all the place was bare and open. He threw the bridle of his horse over a branch, and, as the twilight deepened, he turned very deliberately towards the mansion on foot, and as he did so, the rabbits and hares flitted before him from among the deep rank grass.

In spite of the coldness—almost amounting to hostility—between their families, Cyril Wedderburn and Mary Lennox loved each other dearly. He had met her from time to time at races and country balls, occasionally in the houses of mutual friends. These meetings had not always been pleasant, for latterly they were at times the result of contrivance, as Mr. Lennox, from the peculiarities of his temper, would not have heard of this intimacy with patience.

On the other hand, Cyril was dependent on his father for his allowance—no man can live on his pay in any regiment now, so least of all was it possible in the Royal Fusileers;—and while her father lived, Mary, under any circumstances, could not think of marriage, and so some three years of a secret and undecided engagement between these young people had slipped away at the period when this story opens.

Cyril did not enter the desolate looking courtyard, lest he

might be seen by either of the two female domestics who now composed the sorely reduced household of Oliver Lennox. All was silent in the empty stables and ruined coach-house, and the entire place looked gloomy in the extremity to the eyes of the young officer, accustomed to his father's more spacious and magnificent mansion, with its great oriels of plate-glass, and he sighed when he thought of Mary.

Suddenly, through an open window on the second story, there came the swelling notes of a beautiful and tender soprano voice—a girl's—as she sang the grand old Christmas hymn, accompanying herself upon a piano, which, though a fine one, was nevertheless somewhat old-fashioned and not exactly a grand trichord.

"Poor thing! God bless her kind heart! she is singing to the old man," said Cyril, while he listened intently, with his head reclined against the wall, as if to absorb every sound. "So my little fairy sings in Latin!"

"Adeste fideles,
Læti triumphantes;
Venite, venite in Bethlehem:
Natum videte
Regem angelorum:
Venite adoremus,
Venite adoremus,
Venite adoremus Dominum."

It was a strange song for a young girl; but, in fancy, Cyril could see the old man listening, and perhaps beating time with his fingers on the coverlet or pillow of his bed, as he was soothed away to sleep. The notes pealed out on the calm evening air with a startling effect, each one stirring a chord in the loving heart of the listener without; for as his own soul—yea, and dearer than his own soul—did he love the singer, who, after a pause, dashed into a plaintive little Scottish song, and then, quite as suddenly, into the beautiful solo, *Cujus animam*, from the "Stabat Mater" of Rossini.

At last she ceased. He heard, or thought he heard, the piano closed softly; and in a minute more, with her eyes beaming, her damask cheek glowing with pleasure, as she threw up the veil of her smart little hat, Mary Lennox glided round the corner of the Tower, with her cloak on and her little hands in her muff.

"At last, my darling—at last we meet!" said Cyril, as he drew one of her hands through his arm, and believing that no human eye saw or ear heard them, led her into a denser and darker portion of the grove that grew about her old paternal home.

"I have been singing to poor papa."

"So I thought, Mary; and he is now asleep?"

"Yes," replied Mary Lennox, with a bright smile ; for her meetings with Cyril, though stolen and hasty, were the only bright spots in the usually dreary tenor of her life, and she looked up at her lover admiringly and tenderly. His rough suit of tweed, his grey round felt hat, and scarlet shirt, very open at the neck, became his style of manly beauty well, and showed that he belonged to the class of society which can affect and afford so simple and careless a mode of costume.

"There is no word of your leave being cancelled ?"

"None, dearest."

"Thank God for that !" exclaimed the girl, as she clasped her hands.

"Four whole days have passed, my Mary, and yet I have not seen you !" said Cyril, half reproachfully, while he drew her close to him, gathering her fondly and gracefully to his breast.

"My poor papa has been so ill," she urged, as her eyes filled with tears, and her head sank wearily, yet confidently, on his shoulder.

"I regret to hear it. Poor old man ! I wonder if he will ever receive me ?"

"It would madden him, the very thought of doing so, Cyril."

"This sentiment is very foolish."

"He has neither forgotten nor forgiven that last unhappy dispute about your claim of pasturage on the lower part of the Lee."

"Bother the Lee ! The basket of grapes and peaches I sent from the hothouse —"

"They came ; thanks, darling Cyril ; but papa suspected some friend's kindness—*pity* he called it—and the fruit was thrown to the dog in the yard."

"Folly again."

"It is restless pride, Cyril ; the pride that fights with poverty," pleaded Mary, with a sigh.

Cyril regarded her anxiously. He could perceive that much of her girlish simplicity was passing away ; that there was a sadness in her eyes, and about her whole demeanour a more womanly grace perhaps ; but she was growing paler and thinner in her battle with life—a life that would have been utterly cold, hard, and cheerless, but for the ray of light his love was shedding on it.

"Our households imagine us to be but cold and distant acquaintances, if even so much as that. Could they but peep in here and see us *now*," said he, as he covered her little face with kisses ; for Cyril was merely supposed to lift his hat in the simplest courtesy to Mary, if he passed her on the highway or at church, where she could go but seldom now, in consequence of her father's ill-health, and as for their carriage and horses, they had long become things of the past.

"Oh, it is a great horror to me, Cyril, to be separated as we are," she began.

"As we are supposed to be, you mean, Mary dear."

"And to meet as we do by stealth, practising such dissimulation."

"It is intensely absurd that I, a Captain in the Line, a fellow who has been eight years in the service, should stoop to it."

"Unless for *my* sake, love?"

"True, Mary, true. What would I *not* do for your sake, my sweet pet?"

"But it is degrading to us both, and where will it end?" she said, plaintively.

"It shall end when we are married, darling. Oh, Mary! nightly my dreams are of you, and daily my thoughts. You seem thus to be ever near me, with me, and by me!"

"Oh, Cyril, it is very good of you to love me so."

"Who could help loving you?" was the enthusiastic response.

"Your mamma does not," said she, smiling; "and neither does Sir John; so how much would they hate me did they really know all."

A gesture of impatience escaped Cyril.

"I must and shall end all this by declaring our engagement; and should my allowance be cut off, which I can scarcely anticipate, I can exchange into an Indian regiment, and maintain my wife as other men do."

"But my poor papa?"

"True; and then, I am under orders now for the East!"

"We are very unfortunate," said Mary, while her tears fell fast.

"How unlucky that Mr. Lennox and Sir John have been at cross-purposes so often, in courts of law, at public meetings, elections, and county matters, actually about the very mode of hunting with the county pack. Never were two men more antagonistic; yet is it not strange that—that——"

"We should love each other so tenderly. Is that what you were about to say, Cyril?"

"Yes, Mary darling."

"But what would they say if they knew of our meeting thus?"

"Why torment yourself by thinking of it? Your father would storm finely, I doubt not; mine be loftily indignant; and as for my lady mother, it would be a case of hysterics and sal-volatile. But I do not see why their silly views should ruin our peace, Mary."

"Ah, did Sir John but know how weak and feeble my poor papa is now, that his ebbing life is only a matter of time, he would surely come over and forgive him all."

Cyril scarcely thought so, all the more when he remembered

the rich young cousin who was to arrive so shortly at Willow-dean ; but he looked silently into Mary's eyes of violet-blue, they were brimming with tears, and her face wore a sad and wistful expression. Perhaps she was marvelling how it would be with her when all was over—when Cyril was before the enemy, and that parent, so beloved, had passed away.

"Our engagement seems wrong without the consent of our parents," she murmured, in a low voice ; "and times there are, Cyril, when—when I seek to school myself to the task of releasing you."

A dark and startled expression shot over the fine face of Captain Wedderburn for a moment, for somehow he connected this innocent speech with the idea of Chesters ; but shrinking from putting his thoughts in words, he merely said—

"Your father might well forgive *me* for loving you, Mary, if he would remember how I carried off your brother's body in the face of the enemy, after making a rally and charge with the bayonet at the head of my own company, or rather the survivors of it, at a terrible risk and under a fire of grape from the brass guns of the Sikhs. He might remember, too, how I laid the poor lad in his last home, a lonely grave under a palm tree, near the banks of the Sutledge."

"Alas ! he remembers nothing coherently ; and there are periods when he actually thinks that Harry yet lives, and in moaning terms he entreats him to approach the bed and take his hand."

"And you have neither seen nor met any of my family during my last absence with the regiment, Mary ?"

"No ; and it is better that I have not done so."

"Oh ! why, Mary ?"

"Fearing your return, I suppose, or that your brother Robert might fall in love with me——"

"Why, Mary, Robert is a mere boy !"

"He is about nineteen ; and boys of nineteen fall in love sometimes," said Mary, smiling.

"Well, darling, well ?"

"Fearing the result of these contingencies, your mother has slighted and put many an affront on me. Pardon me for saying so, dearest Cyril, but I cannot forget that my father, though poor, is Lennox of Lonewoodlee."

Cyril Wedderburn struck his heel upon the ground angrily.

"My own Mary," said he, "this style of thing is utterly absurd ; it is like the romance of a family feud, Romeo and Juliet—Montague and Capulet, reproduced by an irritable old gentleman and a match-making woman who thinks no woman good enough for her eldest son."

"You don't know my papa," said Mary, plaintively, and yet resentfully.

"I do. I know him to be rash, extravagant, fiery, and passionate ; but pardon me, dearest, I must not forget how dearly I love his daughter."

"Cyril," said the girl, earnestly, "reared as you have happily been amid the ease and affluence of your own family, you know not the curse of being a poor gentleman."

"Don't I, by Jove ! when bits of blue paper come back, protested or unaccepted, and the Colonel and Paymaster look grave !"

"As I said before, I know not how all this will end. I only know, that irritated by losses, by poverty, and quarrels, how unforgiving my poor papa has become ; how implacable ; and that without some reconciliation with Sir John, I never could dare to speak of—of——"

"Of me ?"

"Of that which is the only happiness of my life—our engagement ; and my heart bleeds and upbraids me for deceiving him, when lying thus on what may prove his deathbed !"

Cyril did not reply, for his lips were pressed to those of Mary, and her tears were mingled with their kisses.

"Situated as we are, Cyril, our engagement may be a long one ; that I don't mind, as I could never leave papa in his present state ; but then it may be a hopeless one for me—that is, papa and I are so poor, so very poor ! You do not know the struggle we have with the world, for all his land is gone, save the patch the old Tower stands on."

"It is a cruel and bitter world," said Cyril (though he, a favourite of fortune, had not found it so), "and you, my tender Mary, are a deuced deal too good for it."

"All are not bad or bitter though ; there, even Chesters of Chesterhaugh——"

"What of him ?" asked Cyril, sharply.

"Finding me weeping one day about a bill of papa's that had become due when we had not a shilling to meet it, he—he——"

"Took it up, I suppose ?"

"Yes, Cyril ; he lifted a load off my heart by doing so ; but I dislike being under an obligation to any one—to him least of all."

"And this bill, what was the amount ?" asked Cyril, gloomily.

"A two hundred pounds bill, Cyril."

"Why did you not write to me ?"

"I did not like to do so," she replied, blushing.

"Had you not faith in me ?" he asked, impetuously.

"Yes, love ; but not in myself. What sound is that ?" she added, starting from his arms.

"Only the hoofs of a horse on the highway," said he, and as they listened the sound died rapidly away on the evening air.

They had been quite unaware, so absorbed were they in each other, that in the twilight gloom and under the shadow of a great larch-tree, a *third* person had been lurking and listening ; one who, when he saw their lips meet, had involuntarily raised his hand and loaded hunting-whip, and with an unuttered malediction—all the deeper for being voiceless, on his cruel white lips—had stolen away, mounted his horse, which, like Cyril's, was concealed in the thicket, and galloped off.

This lurker was no other than Ralph Rooke Chesters, who, intending to visit Mary in passing homeward from the county town, had been compelled to depart, with his heart full of jealousy and his head scheming vengeance.

And now, after a few more tendernesses, Cyril bethought him of his dinner engagement.

"I shall get that bill out of Chesters' hands, if I can," said he ; "one never can tell the use to which he may put such a document, and now good-bye, my darling. At noon to-morrow look for me here ; and at twelve to-night look at your ring and think of me, for at the same moment of time I shall turn to mine and think of you."

They separated, and Mary lingered by the Tower-gate till the last sound of the bay hunter's hoofs died away in the distance, and then she stole on tiptoe back to the bedside of her sleeping father. She had been with Cyril barely an hour, and as if it had been five minutes only, had that delightful hour sped away.

* * * * *

Punctually at twelve that night the girl looked at her ring and murmured the name of her lover, while a beautiful smile spread over her soft pale face, for she was full of romance and enthusiasm.

"The dear fellow ; he is now thinking of me !" she whispered to herself, as she laid her tiny watch on the table in the dressing closet, one of the four little turrets, and proceeded to let down the masses of her rich brown hair prior to arranging it for the night ; but ere the minute hand had gone many seconds beyond the hour of twelve a distant sound came to her ear—a sound that rapidly grew louder.

It was the clanking of hoofs, as a horse in mad career swept along the hard beaten pathway near the Tower. The heart of Mary beat faster, she scarcely knew why ; she threw open the little window of the turret and looked out upon the starry but moonless night, and as she did so the cry of a man in distress

or terror came plainly upward to her listening ear, and when dying away on the wind it sounded strangely like the voice of Cyril Wedderburn.

But after a time she put aside that idea as too absurd! Would he, a finished horseman, ride like a madcap at that break-neck pace, and utter a shout like a tipsy brawler on passing Lone-woodlee?

And yet, she knew not why, she felt unhappy about the circumstance; and this anxiety increased when the following day passed, and the subsequent evening; and yet she saw or heard nothing of Cyril Wedderburn.

CHAPTER VII.

SUSPENSE AND DREAD.

AT noon on the morrow, the time he had promised to come, she looked for Cyril from the turret window of her room, which commanded an extensive view of the road that wound through the grassy and pastoral district. From that turret window and along the same road had more than one ancestress of Mary looked for her husband returning from the Scottish wars, in the times of Cromwell, Montrose, and Dundee, and looked in vain.

Through her lorgnette Mary studied every figure that approached on foot or horseback; there were not many, perhaps three or four only, during the entire day; but there was no appearance of Cyril Wedderburn, either mounted on his favourite bay hunter or afoot with rod and gun.

So for that day the thicket was unvisited; no fond whispers were uttered under the old larch-tree, and when midnight came she looked at her ring as on the preceding night in the vague hope that he might be doing the same, and thinking of her, wherever he might be.

Three days—to Mary, long, anxious, and dreary days—passed away. Knowing that his leave of absence from the Fusileers was so short, she grudged every hour he spent with others, when he passed so few with her, and now a new source of terror occurred. Had the war broken out suddenly, and Cyril's leave been cancelled? But surely he would have written, and however sudden his departure, should have made an effort to see and to bid her farewell.

Was he ill? That was not improbable, as for three days now the parochial Sangrado, Doctor Squills, had not been near Lonewoodlee; but then she knew that such rich folks as those at Willowdean would depend more on the greater medical

talent, for which they could telegraph at any moment to the metropolis.

She was in an agony of suspense ; their residence was not a cheerful place, so visitors were few and far between, and she could learn no tidings of the only other being whom, beside her father, she loved on earth.

On the fourth day, one of her domestics, Alison Home, an elderly woman, who had noticed her feverish anxiety without suspecting its cause, announced that a person on horseback was approaching the house—coming indeed at a gallop over the Lee. Then Mary rushed to her window, only to be disappointed, as she recognised at once, not Cyril Wedderburn on his long-stepping hunter, but the rather awkward figure of Doctor Squills, on his barrel-shaped Galloway cob.

The Doctor was a suave, well-meaning, fair, florid, and passably good-looking man, about thirty-five or forty years of age, anxious to please all, and to spread the practice in a district where the people were so healthy, that, save for his parochial salary, and one or two retired Bengalees with large lovers and purses, he must have starved, his patrons being as few as his patients. Mr. Lennox was certainly a permanent, but far from a lucrative one ; yet the Doctor was kind and attentive, all the more so that he had naturally a secret desire to stand well in Mary's estimation, and whenever he visited Lonewoodlee, he almost unconsciously made a more careful toilette than usual.

She received him with a genuine smile of welcome in the gloomy little dining-room, with its deeply embayed windows, its dingy old family portraits, the two great horsehair sofas and veteran chairs and tables, of the shabbiness of which, by long use and wont, she had ceased to be ashamed, though the pretentious coat-armorial of the Lennoxes was carved in stone above the fireplace, at the richly moulded jambs of which there still hung on each side those steel chains by which the fireirons were secured in the good old Scottish times, when guests would quarrel over their cups, and if their swords were left in the hall, were wont to enforce their arguments with the poker and shovel, if not thus secured to the wall.

"By that bright smile I augur well of my patient, Miss Lennox?" said Doctor Squills, taking Mary's hand between his own, patting it the while, and seeming very much disposed to retain it as he seated himself, for it was a lovely little hand indeed.

"Thanks, Doctor Squills—papa has been singularly easy and free from pain for three days past," replied Mary, making an effort to retain her impatience for some news of the outer world.

"That is good—very good. The composing draught taken as usual, I suppose?"

"All according to your orders. I am a good little nurse, I hope," said Mary, with a smile and a sigh.

There was a pause, and then the Doctor said,

"You have heard the great news, of course, Miss Lennox? but we'll talk of it after I have seen your papa. Is he awake just now?"

"Yes," said Mary in a breathless voice, for the idea of "news" terrified her, and she seemed as one frozen, while the Doctor, after leisurely depositing his hat and gloves on the table, where with trembling hands she was placing a decanter of wine, and cake of her own making, from an antique buffet—with his bland smile of professional sympathy and jaunty step, took the way which he knew so well, to the bedchamber of Mr. Lennox.

What "news" had the Doctor? was it of war and peril, of hasty departure, of sickness or sorrow, of joy and triumph, or what? The Doctor knew nothing of her interest in Cyril; so, could *he* be referred to?

Poor girl! she was not left long in suspense, for the Doctor soon came sliding in with the same jaunty air, saying—

"Pulse regular, head cool, breathing good. Complaining of appetite too; capital! Give him any reasonable thing he may wish. Strength must be kept up at his years, you know, Miss Lennox—at his years especially."

"And you think papa better to-day?"

"Indubitably so—beyond my expectations."

"Thank God for that!" said Mary, fervently.

It was only a brief rally before the great catastrophe; but the good-hearted Doctor had not yet the courage to tell her so.

"You spoke of news, Doctor?" said she.

"Ah—sad—sad—very sad, indeed! Those poor folks are greatly to be pitied."

"Who—where?"

"The family at Willowdean."

"Pitied for what?" exclaimed Mary, starting as she grasped with a white and trembling hand the arm of the sofa on which she sat.

"The awful loss which they have too evidently sustained," said the Doctor, pouring out a glass of poor Mary's indifferent sherry, as he remembered that he had a ten miles' ride over the hills before him.

"What loss? what has happened? Oh, tell me, tell me, Doctor, for the love of Heaven!"

"Is it possible that you have not heard what, now, all in the county know?"

"No—no—no; I have heard nothing," said Mary, wringing

her hands piteously, while her dilated eyes, her blanched visage, and quivering lip betrayed a depth of emotion for which the Doctor, who knew of the coolness between the families, totally failed to account. "What *do* you mean?" she added.

"The disappearance—the death, no doubt—of young Captain Wedderburn, Sir John's heir apparent, the heir to so fine a property, and a title among the oldest of our Nova Scotian baronets—and with a rich wife in prospect too—one we hear worth half a million of money. It is a great and unparalleled calamity, and his family are plunged, as you may well suppose, in the profoundest affliction—the affliction of the wealthy and noble is always *profound*, it would seem, to judge from editorial sympathy—and to be in depth far beyond anything that the middle class or poor folks can have any idea of," added the Doctor, with a sigh, which was perhaps induced more by cynical repining than pure sympathy, as he drank his sherry, and then turned to Mary, and saw, with some amazement and alarm, her crushed and wobegone aspect.

"Disappearance—death?" she thought. "Oh, what does this mean? Do I hear aright? Am I mad, asleep, or dreaming?"

"I see, my dear Miss Lennox, that your tender susceptibilities are greatly shocked; but I can only tell you what I heard, and what the local papers of this morning contain; but first, take a glass of wine, and then listen to me. Take it pray, nay, you must," and the kind Doctor forced her to swallow that which nearly choked her, and then resumed in his chirruping, gossipy manner, "'the terrible catastrophe' happened thus—on Wednesday last—let me see, was it Wednesday or Thursday?"

"Wednesday, I suppose. Go on, in the name of mercy!" said Mary, in a voice all unlike her own; the rich chord was gone, and a cracked unearthly sound now remained.

"Yes, my dear Miss Lennox, it *was* on Wednesday, for the *Berwick Warder* has it so—Captain Wedderburn dined with that gay man of the world (rather too gay he is), Captain Chesters, at the Haugh, but did not return home. His non-appearance at breakfast next morning—though Mr. Asloane rang the great house-bell thrice—created no alarm among the family, as it was supposed he had remained overnight with his new sporting friend and would probably turn up about luncheon time; though as Chesters was only a recent acquaintance, it excited a little surprise at Willowdean that Captain Wedderburn would tax his hospitality. That I learned from Mr. Asloane himself, as I had to ride over to see one of the laundry-maids who had a whitlow, which I treated successfully by —"

"Oh, go on—go on, I implore you!"

"It was on her right thumb—well, you are impatient, I see. After a time a whisper came of his having left Chesterhaugh

before midnight on Wednesday. This was alarming. If so, where had he been for these twelve hours past? The butler came to Lady Wedderburn at the usual hour about orders for the carriage, or horses for riding; they were both postponed, and the luncheon was delayed. Master Robert, his cousin, Lieutenant Ramornie, old Asloane, all the gamekeepers, gardeners, and grooms; even Sir John, and the Master of Ernescleugh, with all his people, proceeded to beat the woods, shrubberies, the park, and all the roads, but did so in vain. No traces of the Captain were discovered until yesterday, when a hat—a grey felt wide-awake, known to be his—was found at Buncle-edge, and his silver-mounted whip at Falaknowe, about a mile further eastward. There were no traces of blood, however. Pardon me, for I seem to shock you: but last night the darkest tidings of all came from Lady Juliana Ernescleugh. A horse known to be his, a fine bay hunter with black fetlocks, which he had purchased from her son the Master, was found by some of the Dunbar fishermen sorely bruised, battered, and drowned, with saddle-girths reversed, beside the rocky cleugh or beach, somewhere near Fast Castle. So what has happened, how he has perished or by what means, and as to where his body may be lying, whether on the land or in the sea, we are as yet helplessly and hopelessly in the dark. It is a terrible and melancholy catastrophe, and affects you deeply, I see, my dear young lady. I know not whether you ever saw Captain Wedderburn, but he was one of the finest young men in the Merse."

As the Doctor concluded this harrowing story, calmly and quietly, but unwittingly dealing death-stabs in her heart, poor Mary Lennox sank quietly back with eyes closed into a recess of the sofa; she was icy cold, and but for his presence and the means he took to recover her, by forcing her to take more wine, she must have fainted.

A stupor or torpor seemed to come over her. She became stunned, blind, and almost deprived of the power of volition. She knew not what to think or believe, or what to do. Aware of the stern necessity for keeping up appearances and for preventing the secrets of her heart from becoming patent to a stranger, she made a vehement essay to start up and question the Doctor again, only to find that he had been gone for nearly an hour and she had known it not. Neither she knew nor cared what instructions regarding herself he had left with her two startled and dismayed domestics.

She only knew and could only realize that her lover, her affianced husband, the secret husband of her heart, had perished by some miserable death, whether the result of foul play or some terrible accident she might never know; and now

she recalled with grief and terror how she had heard a horse galloping madly past, when she looked at her watch on that fatal Wednesday at midnight ; and the wild cry, the prompting, as it seemed, of fear or of despair, that came upward to her ear ; and how she had associated that cry with the voice of Cyril Wedderburn !

And his horse had been found at Ernescleugh, near Fast Castle (the Wolf's Craig of Scott's romance), and she knew how frightfully steep the rocks are there !

Her kind, her handsome, and her loving Cyril ! Never again would his strong arm caress her slender waist, or his love-lit eyes gaze tenderly into hers ; and now all his soft and loving ways came vividly before her, mingled with a dreadful sense of calamity and loss, till the very tears—tears which she longed to mingle with those of his haughty mother—almost choked her as she lay on her bed, prostrate on her face.

On Wednesday she had seen him last, and this was Sunday forenoon : she could hear the bells for service ringing in the village church about a mile distant to remind her of the fact, and that four days—four days in this age of steam and telegraphy had elapsed without trace or tidings of her lost one !

Then she became suddenly aware that her father was ringing his hand-bell furiously, and was querulously, even peevishly, demanding her presence for something.

Her tears, and the cause of them, she was alike compelled to conceal ; so after bathing her eyes hurriedly, she tottered away to attend him as usual.

CHAPTER VIII.

MARY'S MISTAKE.

SHE regretted that she had permitted her emotions to overpower her so much in the presence of the Doctor, and that hence he had been allowed to depart without further questioning when she had so many inquiries to make. From Alison Home and her other domestic she could gather nothing, save that on the same Wednesday, at midnight, they had both heard the swiftly-ridden horse pass along the roadway, and also the strange cry of the rider.

Could it be possible, she was ever asking of herself, that they would meet no more ? Never more in the thicket, never more at the stile in the lane at the end of the Lee ? that she should never again be gathered to his breast so kindly and so tenderly ?

Cyril's love had made her very happy ; so much so that it often inspired her with gratitude to God for blessing her so, and no shadow had ever rested upon it, save the secrecy they were compelled to practise, as they hoped, for a time only, and being both proudly spirited, they had felt that necessity a degradation and source of irritation. Now all that and the love itself had passed away, and a cloud of thought and gloom black as midnight, seemed to envelop the pale girl as she sat alone in the little chamber, gazing listlessly at the sunlit scenery, and with no sound in her ears save the beating of her heart.

Oh, had her brother Harry been spared to her, thought she, Cyril's friend and comrade in India, how differently might she have been situated ! How she longed to rush to Willowdean and prosecute inquiries there, but dared not even give expression to the thought !

Only lately she had been anticipating in dread the withdrawal or expiry of his short leave of absence, and his departure to Turkey with the proposed Allied Army. Now she felt that to see him going forth even to face the perils and chances of the threatened Russian war would be a welcome exchange for the present doubt and horror she endured.

All that day no food passed her lips, and as evening drew on the dread of enduring another night without some further intelligence proved too much for her grief and impatience ; so the craving to go forth and inquire personally—she could not trust to the discretion of her servants, and shrunk instinctively from their morbid surmises—became so strong, that on finding her father sleeping calmly and peacefully after the slight repast he deemed a dinner, she dressed herself in haste to go out—but for where and to whom were her next thoughts ?

The nearest house was Chesterhaugh ; it was little more than four miles distant, and though she shrunk from the idea of seeing or being seen by Captain Chesters, she resolved, come what might, to question his gatekeeper, as if casually, about the last he had seen of Cyril Wedderburn ; for as the coldness between the two families was pretty well known in that secluded district, she felt assured that the man would imagine her to be prompted by the merest curiosity.

As she set forth on foot, she sighed when passing the empty coachhouse and the stables where the hoofs of horses and the rattle of their stall collars were heard no more. She was young, active, and would walk the distance in an hour ; yet not to repine a little when she thought of all that should and might have been, was perhaps impossible.

She did not anticipate that the gatekeeper could add much to the alarming details already furnished by the Doctor, yet she longed to see him as one who, however humble, had been the

last who looked on Cyril's winning face and heard his cheerful voice ; moreover, the utter solitude of her home had proved on this day intolerable. She dared not speak of the occurrence to her father, for he would be the last perhaps to express genuine sympathy ; so the desire to move abroad, to speak to some one, to be doing anything but sitting still and brooding, became an irresistible impulse.

Full of her own thoughts as she walked on, she did not perceive how stormy clouds had enveloped the afternoon sun ; that the dull grey mist was rolling swiftly along the grassy glens and upward to the slopes of the Lammermuirs, and with how melancholy a sound the wind shook in gusts the leafless trees of the old wood near the Tower, while on the hill sides the shepherds were driving fast their flocks to the thatched *bughts*, or sheepfold in sheltered places. Neither was she aware that her chief domestic, old Alison Home, was looking after her with mingled admiration and compassion, as if reading something of her secret, when she passed out upon the highway ; for Mary Lennox, though charming at times, was looking unusually handsome, graceful, and compact in her smart velvet hat and plume—the wing of a golden pheasant shot for her by Cyril—her cuffs and muff of grey Iceland duck, her jacket of sealskin (imitation, we are sorry to say), her veil drawn tightly over her pretty face and ears, and her skirts looped up, less to show the scarlet petticoat, taper ancles, and balmorals, than for activity, as she set forth.

Which of all those hoof-marks she could trace upon the road were those of Cyril's fatal horse ? How often had she walked along that road to church and to the nearest market town since they had lost their carriage, but never with a heart so heavy, and with such a sensation of being benumbed and stupefied with grief.

"Sorrow, misery, and horror !" she muttered from time to time. "Oh what a life is before me now ! Cyril, Cyril !" and at the sound of his name, even on her own lips, the tears rolled forth beneath the closely drawn veil, and the little hands were wrung convulsively within her muff.

Every moment she thought that she *must* see him coming to meet her ; it seemed impossible that he could be thus blotted out of existence ! All appeared chaos and confusion to Mary as she walked on ; the order of events and the course of time seemed to be alike inverted.

It appeared as if years had elapsed since she had last seen Cyril—last stood in his close embrace in yonder thicket, and heard his loving voice, while the events of years ago seemed to have happened yesterday ; even his arrival from India, when she was much younger, with her dead brother's sword and

watch, his rings and lock of hair, and the happy subsequent time when his and her secret intimacy began. How much had passed since then ; they were lovers, and engaged, so solemnly too—and now—the mass of unuttered thoughts seemed to rend her heart !

Circumstances had given her few friends, and now she sorely felt the want of one.

School companions, girls from town and elsewhere, with gay and happy home circles, had occasionally broken the monotony of her life by becoming her guests ; but she grew painfully conscious that owing to the dreary seclusion of the old Tower, where few sounds met the ear save the bleating of sheep or the whistle of the curlew, and also from her father's querulous eccentricity, they curtailed their visits, and seldom or never came again. Then, as he ailed so frequently and aged so fast, she could not accept invitations in return, even those given by neighbours so near as Lady Ernescleugh and others, who were disposed to be kind to the lonely little Chatelaine of Lonedwoodlee.

Ere long she reached the handsome iron gate and grotesque little lodge of Chesterhaugh, beyond which she could see the sweep of the gravelled approach that led to the house. The park was perfectly bare and open now, as the thriftless Captain had long since converted into cash every tree on the estate ; and the park itself, once his father's pride, was now let to a grazier of cattle.

Mary was flushed and breathless as she approached the gate. She had walked very quick that she might the sooner return, and she had not been insensible to the fast increasing coldness of the temperature, the howling of the March wind, and the gathering of dark masses of cloud in the east, hastening, or anticipating by nearly an hour the shades of evening.

She was in the act of questioning old Tony Heron, the lodge-keeper, who approached her respectfully with a hand at his hat, "if the tidings were true that Captain Wedderburn"—how her voice faltered as her quivering lips pronounced the name—"had really suffered by some accident after leaving Chesterhaugh," when the sound of hoofs struck her ear, and before the man could fully reply, Captain Chesters—in nearly the same costume in which he had breakfasted at Willowdean—dashed up, accompanied by his favourite and only groom, Billy Trayner, to whom he at once threw the reins of his horse on dismounting.

"Good morning, Miss Lennox," said he, lifting his hat with profound courtesy.

"It is evening, rather," said Mary, covered with confusion and annoyance by this unexpected *rencontre*, "and I must not delay lest poor papa—"

"Ah! to be sure; but the old gentleman was all right, fast asleep, Alison told me, as I stopped for a moment at the Tower to inquire for you in passing. But to what good fairy is the humble house of Chesterhaugh indebted for the honour of a visit from you, Miss Lennox, and alone too?" he added, as he led her very deliberately inside the gate, which the keeper shut; "and you have no demon of a duenna or chaperon. It beats cock-fighting, 'bangs Banagher,' as O'Grady of ours used to say."

"You make me feel more and more the extreme awkwardness of my situation by this banter, Captain Chesters," said Mary; "but—but——"

"Out with it. You came to ask about young Wedderburn!" exclaimed Chesters, bluntly.

"Yes, sir," said the lodgekeeper officiously; "she was just asking me when you rode up, and I was about to tell her——"

"That according to our old Scottish proverb, 'a fu' man and a fasting horse go quickly home'—but, by Jove! Cyril Wedderburn went rather further than he quite reckoned on."

"I ask pardon, sir, but I think you are wrong," said the man, touching his hat; "the Captain was not the worse of wine, though his horse seemed mad."

"How the devil should you know anything about it? Silence, Tony!"

"I let him out, and shut the gate."

"Then shut your mouth now, or speak only when you are spoken to," said the Captain, furiously, on which the man slunk into his lodge, abashed.

"Poor Cyril Wedderburn!" said Mary, biting her nether lip to control her emotion.

"He left Chesterhaugh quietly enough, but his horse was disposed to be restive, straining hard on the curb, and so forth, and would seem to have run away with him. It is a very mysterious and melancholy affair," added Chesters, drawing off one of his riding gloves; "but if you will permit me to lead you into the house I shall then tell you all about it, at least, all that I can pretend to know."

"Thanks, no, excuse me," replied Mary, hurriedly, as she was nearly swept away by a sudden gust of wind, while hail and snow came on suddenly with great force and density. "Good Heavens!" she exclaimed, "it is quite a storm. I must take shelter here a few minutes, if you will permit me."

"In my gate-lodge? Impossible! Absurd! Come with me into the house, and if the blast does not lull in a few minutes, I shall have the pleasure of driving you over to Lonewoodlee."

Mary looked rather despairingly through the bars of the handsome iron gate, and saw the bleak wide moorland waste she had traversed whitening fast, and that the road was becoming

more and more obscure, as the snow covered and the darkness overshadowed it ; and while her tears and her repugnance to accept the invitation increased, she said—

"Thank you, Captain Chesters ; you are very kind. I was most rash to come ; but I could scarcely walk back now, and alone too."

"To walk alone ; the thing is not to be thought of. And do not talk of thanks, you owe me none. Do permit me." And taking her hand with all the suavity he could assume—for Chesters was harassed in aspect, having been questioned and cross-questioned by the Procurator Fiscal and the constabulary till he was sickened by the name of Cyril Wedderburn—he conducted Mary into the house of Chesterhaugh, where she had not been for several years, since she was a little girl and led by her father's hand.

Through the marble-floored and oak-panelled entrance-hall, which was hung with spoils of the field and chase—trophies of arms brought by Chesters from India, tiger skins, skulls and horns, with a multitude of whips and spurs, cloaks and riding-boots ; thence through a long corridor, that in his father's time had been furnished by magnificent cabinets of buhl and marqueterie, and hung with fine old paintings, all of which had gone, like the trees of the park—he led her into a handsome and well-appointed dining-room.

Though the assurance given by Chesters that he had left her father asleep but a short time before was not strictly true, it tended to soothe Mary's mind a little till the shower of hail that crashed on the windows of the room disturbed her, all the more that the closely-drawn curtains, and the twelve waxlights in the chandelier of Florentine bronze suggested ideas of night-fall, though the hour was barely six o'clock.

Chesters courteously drew a chair for her near the fire, and led her to it.

"Permit me to relieve you of your muff and hat. Won't you even lift your veil ?" he entreated, as he leant, half caressingly, over her chair ; but Mary was determined to remain in all her walking gear, to be ready for departure, and said—

"Captain Chesters, do kindly order Trayner to drive me home without delay."

"Why such haste ?"

"I perceive that you are just going to dine."

"And will you not share my poor bachelor fare, and by your presence shed a light over my lonely board for an hour or so, and then I shall drive you home in person ?"

But Mary was resolute. No food had passed her lips ; but she had dined, she said, long ago, by her papa's bedside. Go she must, and at once, she added, and was only pleased that her

tears and her blushes of irritation were hidden by her tightly drawn veil, as with a very peculiar expression in his face, Captain Chesters languidly rang the bell for Trayner.

Unlike her gloomy paternal residence, and unlike the more elegant and modern mansion of Willowdean, the house of Chesterhaugh had been built in the reign of George II., when art was at its lowest ebb in Scotland, and taste was studied less than solid comfort. It was a great square block, three stories in height, with all its chimneys clustered in the centre; the roof sloped down from them in the pavilion form, and the outside walls were roughcast with gravel and lime; and poor Mary thought sadly of her own older-fashioned and more sordid home, and of the few comforts that surrounded the declining days of her father, as she surveyed and contrasted with a rapid glance all the details of the spacious and lofty dining-room of Chesterhaugh—the walnut-wood furniture so elaborately carved, the chairs of green morocco, the crimson damask window-curtains with their gilded cornices, the many pictures in which horses seemed to predominate in place of men; the brilliant plate console mirrors, in which all these objects were reproduced in two endless perspectives; the elegant ironstone dinner-service of pink and gold, laid for Chesters; the massive plate; the claret airing near the fire—and she marvelled how all this luxury was supported, when remembering that the Captain had the reputation of being a spendthrift, a bankrupt, and worse.

She little knew that Cyril Wedderburn, when last he had been in that room, had sat in the very chair she now occupied; but Chesters remembered the circumstance, and a disdainful smile crossed his face as he did so.

Again and again he pressed her to take wine; but Mary steadily declined; and at last, after being rung for thrice, Mr. Bill Trayner appeared—a very good specimen of a smart but unscrupulous groom, small in stature, with a long body and short bandy legs, a mean and narrow forehead, sleek black hair, shorn short, with a circular lock or curl plastered on each prominent cheek-bone, and with sharp, cunning eyes.

Bill was a Scotchman of Newmarket growth, and to all the worst points of the national character, added the roguery that may be so easily gained in the atmosphere of the betting-house, the stable-yard, and training-ground. He kept a betting-book as well as his master, whom he was always ready to second in mischief, and to betray, if it suited his private interests to do so.

A perfect oracle on all matters pertaining to the turf, he knew by heart or rote all the entries and engagements made at the various race meetings throughout the country; and knew shrewdly which horses were the best to back and which were likely to be scratched.

"How about the waggonette, Trayner?" said Chesters. "You know I have no other carriage, Miss Lennox," he added, parenthetically, to Mary.

"The waggonette, sir," repeated Trayner, trying to fathom the meaning of a peculiar glance his master gave him.

"Yes, the waggonette with the patent springs," resumed Chesters, with a remarkably knowing wink.

"The springs is broke, sir," replied Trayner, with a similar mode of telegraph, when he glanced at Miss Lennox, and took in the whole situation.

"Broken—the devil they are!"

"All to smash, sir."

"Then the waggonette won't be in working order for——"

"Not for ever so long, sir."

"Then I must walk, and at once!" said Mary, rising from her chair. "I have not a moment to lose."

"Walk? Listen to the rising blast and the crash of the hailstones," urged Chesters.

"Ah, there's more there than hailstones, Miss," said Trayner. "It is a regular feeding storm. The snow is some inches deep already."

"Oh, my poor papa!" exclaimed Mary. "If he is awake and calling for me! Surely the lodgekeeper will accompany me?"

"The two old women at Lonewoodlee will surely suffice as attendants for a couple of hours."

"Hours? Impossible, Captain Chesters!"

"That will do, Trayner. You may go," said Chesters, and his *fidus Achates* vanished with a leer, which he conveyed to the servants in the hall below, together with the information that "the master had been and gone and done it again. Here's a lark! He's got that girl of old Lennox's, and means to keep her in Chesterhaugh all night if he can—only she seems spirited, and likely to kick over the traces."

Mary had seen something of the man's expression of face as he retired, and she felt that in her anxiety and grief for Cyril Wedderburn she had made a mistake it was too late to remedy now; but it was destined to have a fatal effect upon her interests and happiness at a future time.

CHAPTER IX.

A SNARE.

SHE rushed to the window and drew back the heavy damask curtains. Snow—snow and hail on the bitter blustering wind

of March had whitened all the moorland waste, and was deepening fast there.

She permitted the curtain to drop from her tremulous hand, and returned in a kind of despair to her seat ; for although the distance between her and home was short, the night was too wild for her to venture forth alone.

"It will serve no purpose your taking this little delay so much to heart," said Chesters. "You must have patience. Pray compose yourself, and do lay aside your wraps."

"Excuse me, I cannot," replied Mary, in a choking voice.

"And so you came to ask about young Wedderburn !"

"Yes," faltered Mary ; "but only of the gatekeeper as I was passing."

"That young muff, the Master of Ernescleugh, is making himself excessively busy in the affair."

"But they are—alas ! must we say *were*—neighbours—friends," urged Mary, with surprise at his tone.

"That is no reason why he should have come to me thrice with the people of the Procurator Fiscal in the prosecution of inquiries. He should join his regiment in London, or his papa, my Lord Ernescleugh, at his government in the Ionian Isles, and leave Cyril Wedderburn and his fate to the family and the local authorities ; but he'll linger on here no doubt, and enter stakes for the heiress."

"What heiress ?"

"Haven't you heard about her ?" asked Chesters, with a languid but malevolent smile.

"No."

"Sir John Wedderburn's brother William has died lately at Madras, and left his whole fortune, some three hundred thousand pounds at least, with a palace in the Choultry, to his only daughter—a girl, who is coming to Willowdean as her new home. She is a great beauty, they say ; and Mamma Wedderburn," he added, a little spitefully, "had an eye on her as a wife for Cyril."

"I know nothing of it," sighed Mary.

"Ah, but I do. I was at breakfast with the family on the morning the news came, and I read the whole intention in Lady Wedderburn's face and manner ; but now, as Cyril has gone, that legal prig Bob will very likely have a chance of making her a prize."

Mary only answered these surmises so slangily expressed by her silent tears ; but while he spoke she remembered, as one in a dream—for she had not slept since she heard them—the words of the Doctor about a rich bride in prospect for her lost Cyril.

But the rumour excited neither jealousy nor fear. Oh, what did it matter now !

She looked so exquisitely lady-like as she sat with her little hands folded in her tiny muff which rested on her knees, and her veiled face upturned to Chesters, that he—no bad judge of breeding in women or horses—thought what a creditable-looking wife she would make for him or any man ; but she was poor, and he was up to the ears in debt ; thus neither her poverty nor her beauty excited his pity, though they gave quick suggestion to his worst passions. He loved Mary in a fashion of his own ; but he knew that the wife for him must have money, and poor Mary had none.

Full of grief as he saw she was for the terrible and mysterious disappearance of Cyril Wedderburn, Captain Rooke Chesters was far too judicious, or far too cunning, to press any suit of his own just then. He could wait his opportunity ; but he thought that if by luring or detaining her under any pretence in his own house for a few hours, he could compromise, or place her in a false position, it would achieve all he wanted at the time.

All that day, we have said, she had not taken food, yet he pressed her in vain to join him at dinner. She felt weak, ill, and giddy. The room seemed to become larger and larger still ; its further end appeared to recede as if to a vast distance ; all around her became like a species of phantasmagoria, and only by a violent effort of her own will did she resist the faintness that was stealing over her.

She was in an agony of mind as the hours of the stormy night wore on.

She pictured to herself her ailing and querulous father asking for her, in an alarm that might prove detrimental to his shaken system—missing the poor wan girl, who, in her faded dressing-gown, was at all hours of the weary night ever at hand to give him the medicines or soothing draughts prescribed for him by Doctor Squills ; ever ready to arrange the pillows ; to caress him and bathe his hot and tremulous hands or aching head with cold water, with Rimmel or other aromatic vinegar ; and she was here—*here* at Chesterhaugh, imprisoned by the darkness, the hail, and the snow !

Chesters had his own dark purpose to achieve, and as he forsook champagne for claret, and idled over his walnuts, he viewed her impatience and her mental agony with perfect composure, though treating her with well-bred sympathy the while.

But, as the night wore on, Mary felt more and more the awkwardness, the ultimate doubt and danger of her position, in being thus alone, without a lady friend or chaperon, in the house of a bachelor ; and more than all, one who bore such a local reputation as Ralph Rooke Chesters ! She was conscious that the very servant—he of the inevitable calves and plush—

who removed the dinner and brought in maraschino and coffee, inspired by some of Mr. Bill Trayner's knowing remarks and cruel inferences in the servants' hall below, regarded her with curious eyes.

It has been said that "even bad men have some good traits in them, and that selfish men are capable of *feeling*."

Perhaps it may be so ; but Chesters was incapable of sensibility or caring for any one but himself, and was destitute of a single good trait or generous emotion ; so even while watching Mary's restlessness, agitation, and her evident dread of the detention she was undergoing, he muttered, inwardly—

"Pshaw ! women can't help loving those who love them ; so I'll make a bold attempt to cozen, if I cannot crush or win her !"

It was perhaps a little dangerous for Mary that, though she often expressed and displayed a great aversion of Chesters, there were *times* when she did not altogether feel it ; for few women can *hate* a man who professes to love and consequently admire them : yet, seeing the full sense of her false position, she began to hate and fear him now.

Should the story get abroad that she had spent some hours in his house, under any circumstances, it was a *contretemps* that might cost her dear ; for how would the censorious world interpret her conduct or acknowledge her reason ? That she had come to inquire about the fate of Cyril Wedderburn, and been storm-stayed, few would believe, for what vital interest was *she* supposed to have in the lost heir of Willowdean ?

Alas, alas ! for secret loves.

Secluded though her life had been at Lonewoodlee, she knew quite enough of the world to be aware that a young lady could not, with propriety, visit a gay young bachelor as she appeared to have done—one to whom she was neither related nor engaged—and it was this consciousness, together with the craving desire to be again by her father's side, that made her so steadily resist taking any refreshment, even coffee, or doffing any part of her costume, and which made her writhe under the well-bred commonplaces uttered by Chesters, such as that he "hoped she wouldn't fret. What the deuce was the good of it ! The storm must soon abate ; indeed, it was abating now. It is very unfortunate, no doubt," and all that sort of thing ; adding, "but it is very stupid work this, and we should do something to amuse each other."

Yet he could neither soothe nor amuse her ; he could not leave her for the smoking-room ; neither could he smoke in her presence, and so betook him to champagne dashed with brandy, a perilous mixture, through the influence of which some very daring ideas began to form in his cunning brain.

Bad, bold, and daring as he was, Rooke Chesters would

scarcely have ventured to trepan a girl of Mary Lennox's undoubted rank in the county into a false position, but for his perfect knowledge of her father's helplessness, his poverty, and the bill he possessed. Moreover, the only man who would have protected her—the lover whose arms he had seen around her in the thicket—was gone, no one knew where or how.

"There is a climax in this life," says a writer, with stern truth, "a climax in mental and bodily pain, after which we can feel no more, and after it all other sources of emotion appear tame by comparison." And this climax had poor Mary passed already.

Cyril was gone; her father she knew was dying; and when he went, who would she have to care for, to study, or to love? Hence for a time, perhaps, she cared less what happened to herself, till the massive black marble clock on the mantelpiece struck the alarming hour of eleven.

"Eleven! I have been here five whole hours! Oh, I shall go afoot, if I die on the moor! I cannot and must not stay here another moment!" she exclaimed, starting from her chair and moving towards the door. "Oh, papa—my own papa—how much you may have missed me!"

"Be not in such a hurry, pray. I had a pleasant surprise for you," said he, laughing.

"How, Captain Chesters?"

"Trayner must have patched up the springs of the waggonette by this time. He is a clever fellow, Trayner, and if the horses are put to, I shall take you over in a few minutes."

"Oh, thanks—a thousand times thanks!"

"No thanks are necessary."

Again he rang the bell, and said, with perfect calmness, to the servant who answered the summons—

"Tell Trayner to get out the waggonette, if it is ready; trace the horses, and bring it round to the front door."

Without perceiving in the least the intelligent glance that passed between Chesters and his domestic, Mary could know that she had been deluded and drawn into a species of snare, the object of which she did not then quite clearly comprehend.

In a few minutes more the tramp of horses' hoofs and the muffled sound of wheels amid the snow without were heard, and Mary rose, her face almost beaming with delight through her veil, as she took his proffered arm to be led forth on her way home at last.

The waggonette, a very handsome "bang-up affair," as Chesters deemed it, was drawn up close to the flight of steps which led to the entrance door; and the long lines of radiance from its two silver lamps shone far amid the white waste of snow in the now treeless park. The storm had ceased, the wind

had passed away, and the clouds were divided in Heaven overhead; the stars shone out with frosty brilliance, and the night was calm and clear. The steam from the quivering nostrils of the impatient horses curled up in white wreaths above their heads.

Chesters lifted Mary—somewhat lingeringly, even caressingly perhaps, as he did so—upon the front seat, and carefully folded a warm railway-rug over her shoulders; then buttoning the leather apron across her knees as he took his seat beside her. Mr. Bill Trayner vaulted up behind, and away they went, yet it was close on the hour of twelve (midnight) ere they were clear of the lodge-gates, the drowsy keeper of which observed with surprise the lady who was *still* his master's companion—Miss Lennox of Lonewoodlee!

As Chesters bent his face close to hers, he thought the time had come when he might venture to say something tender, and the champagne he had imbibed caused him to do it bluntly.

"Women, like men, may love many times in life; but none, Miss Lennox, as I now love you—believe me, I speak from my heart."

"At this time I entreat you not to torment me in that way," said Mary; "in Heaven's name, I implore you!" she continued.

"Ah, you think only of Cyril Wedderburn!" was the spiteful rejoinder.

"I do," said Mary, a dash of anger mingling with her grief, as her tears fell fast again.

"I am a lover as well as he was."

"Of mine do you mean?"

"Yes."

"No, sir—no," replied Mary, firmly. "I cannot permit you to talk thus, and take advantage of my situation."

"What the deuce do you mean?" he asked, bluntly.

"That you are no lover, though a love-maker."

"Are they not the same?" asked Chesters, with unaffected surprise.

"Nay, Captain Chesters, the difference between them is great."

"As you please," said he, biting his nether lip, while he lightly touched the horses with the lash about the ears.

The lodge-gate had scarcely closed behind them when a mounted gentleman, wearing an Inverness cape of rough material (which, like his half-bullet hat, was coated with snow), and long black overalls, came up at a hard trot, accompanied by a diminutive groom. On passing the waggonette, he curbed

his horse abruptly back upon his haunches, and half looking round, cried cheerily—

"Hallo, Chesters, old fellow, where are you going? A bitter night for March!"

"Very. Good night," replied Chesters, without stopping; for the speaker was young Everard Home, the Master of Ernescleugh, who was very much surprised to see a young lady leaving the gate of Chesterhaugh at that time of night, and alone with Rooke Chesters! But in a few minutes he was perfectly enlightened on the subject by his groom, who rang the lodge-bell on pretence of wanting a light for his cigar.

A terror seized Mary lest she might have been recognized by these men. She said nothing of it to Chesters, for the deduction was humiliating; but her tears fell again, and she whispered in her heart—

"Oh, what matter is it? I have no Cyril now!"

She was soon deposited, with great politeness on the part of Chesters, at her own door, and in her anxiety and irritation she darted in and closed it, forgetting even to thank him for his escort.

Her father had slept soundly for hours; but now he was awake, and calling alternately for her and his dead son Harry, upbraiding them both for neglect, and threatening that he would break his own neck when next he rode to the hounds, "even as he once hoped that fellow Wedderburn had done;" and Mary's heart died within her, when she found his intellect thus wandering. But the brave girl cast aside her wrappings, took his old head carefully in her tender arms, and strove to forget, what might be nervous fancy only, that her two drowsy domestics who had seen her arrive in Chesters' equipage, looked somewhat oddly on her, and at each other.

CHAPTER X.

CHESTERHAUGH.

LET us now recur to a few nights ago, for the unravelling of much of this mystery.

With the soft memory of a minute and delicate little face that had been for nearly an hour so close to his own in the dark thicket, and all unaware that he had been observed or watched, Cyril Wedderburn rode at a hard gallop from Lonewoodlee, and ere long had reined up at Chesterhaugh, tossed his bridle to the obsequious Bill Trayner, who tugged his forelock as he led admiringly away the bay hunter, and then Cyril was ushered into the same dining-room in which Mary Lennox was afterwards to spend the weary and anxious hours we have described.

"Glad to see you, Wedderburn," said the host, taking his proffered hand ; "punctual to a minute nearly."

"Nay, scarcely. I'm a quarter of an hour late," replied Cyril, who was flushed by the rasping pace at which he had ridden the few miles that lay between Chesterhaugh and Willowdean.

"The salmon won't be spoiled, I daresay," said Chesters, with an imperceptible smile ; "but it takes one some time to get round that thicket at Lonewoodlee, if one's horse don't clear the stile. After your ride, have a B and S."

"Thanks ; no. I suppose you mean brandy and soda ?" said Cyril, who disliked slang, and who coloured a little at the reference to the thicket at Lonewoodlee.

"A glass of Madeira then, or a nip of Kimmel ?"

"Neither. I have an excellent appetite, and don't wish it spoiled."

"Cautious !" muttered Chesters, under his moustache, as he eyed with covert malevolence and suspicion the open and handsome countenance of his guest, who sat in a lounging yet elegant attitude in one of the soft elbow-chairs.

"Covers for two only, I perceive ; so we dine alone ?"

"Yes. I wanted Home of Ernescleugh to join us ; but he is engaged. By-the-bye, I should have asked your cousin Ramornie and your brother Bob, but——"

"Robert is not a player, neither is Horace, and we meant to turn a card to-night," said Cyril, coldly, and evidently disliking the assumption of familiarity in the other, who was but a recent acquaintance.

"I knew that—hence my omission."

The real reason was, that when Chesters played he disliked to have spectators.

"And now let us to dinner," he added, as they seated themselves at table.

The viands were all that could be desired, and the wines also were unexceptionable. Cyril was not a toper, so the suggestions of Chesters to try various heady vintages fell flatly on his ear, as he contented himself with pale dry sherry, an occasional glass of Sauterne, and after dinner adhered rigidly to claret, greatly to the disgust, apparently, of his entertainer.

Their conversation ran for a time on the topics of the day ; the increasing prospects of a war in the East ; the departure of our fleet for the Baltic, with hopes that "old Charlie Napier would knock Cronstadt to pieces ;" and the chances of the "sick man at Stamboul being," as Chesters phrased it, "snuffed out by the Russians," unless France, Britain, and Sardinia were prompt in succouring him.

Then came local matters, the pack of harriers, the master of

the foxhounds, and his new mode of hunting the country ; race meetings and sporting news of various kinds, till after the claret jug had travelled pretty often between the two, Chesters, with his own secret purposes and his own ends in view, began to talk on matters more nearly concerning themselves ; but not until the cloth had been removed and the servants had withdrawn.

"When does your Indian cousin arrive?"

"Don't exactly know," replied Cyril, curtly.

"Ah ! when you are in Turkey, Lady Wedderburn will have to play the duenna closely with the heiress—three hundred thousand pounds, by Jove !"

"Her fortune is said to exceed that."

"Fellows will swarm round her like flies round a honey-pot."

Cyril made no reply, but toyed with the embossed grape scissors.

"Will your family winter in Edinburgh or London?" asked Chesters.

"In London, of course ; if they don't remain at Willowdean."

"Edinburgh is a seedy place, after all, with its legal prigs and tradesmen's daughters—'merchants,' as Dr. Johnson laughingly said they called themselves. What would she do amid its 'upper ten dozen?' No suitable match would be there, and small amusement among its dreary gaieties."

"You talk bitterly of the Athens of the North," said Cyril, smiling.

The truth was, that Chesters had been black-balled at one or two of the clubs there ; his proposal, that character was estimated at a low figure indeed. After a pause, he said, abruptly—

"Why don't you cut the service now——"

"On the eve of a war !" exclaimed Cyril.

"Yes ; and cut in for the heiress. I should if I were you, and I think Lady Wedderburn would like it."

"I trust, Captain Chesters, and I doubt it not, that Lady Wedderburn will leave me to choose for myself," said Cyril with considerable hauteur at what he justly deemed presumption in the other.

"Don't take it up that way, my dear fellow. *Pardonnez moi*, and let us say no more about it. Will you try a glass of my port ? I have some that has been thirty years in the cellar ; it belonged to my father when he was master of the foxhounds, and he was as good a judge of wine as of horses."

"Thanks ; no. I'll adhere to the claret. It is one of the curses which attend the heir to a fortune or a title—even a baronetcy," resumed Cyril, with reference to Chesters' advice, and feeling considerably ruffled, "to have his matrimonial views or intentions made the subject of debate and specula-

tion among aunts, match-making mothers, and meddling friends. This or that girl will be suggested to him, and perpetually thrown in the way till he shudders at her name ; while the one he might prefer—the one whom perhaps he loves in secret—is deemed unsuitable, and is sedulously kept from him."

"Ah, yes—very true," said Chesters ; and as the voice of Cyril grew gradually tremulous, the memory of the former recurred to the recent scene in the thicket, and a pang of jealousy shot through his heart.

Chesters and Cyril alike loved the pure and simple-minded Mary, and it was perhaps strange they should *both* do so, as they were so different in their habits, tastes, and nature. The former was a man without soul or heart—selfish and sensual. The latter was innately refined, so his love was as full of delicacy, tenderness, compassion, and spirituality, as that of Chesters was mere earthly passion, amid which he could calmly see with satisfaction that ere long death, debt, difficulties, and utter friendlessness, with the loss of Cyril by separation, would cast the hapless girl completely at his mercy !

The same image filled the minds of both these men at the same time, but each viewed it from a very different point.

"You know Oliver Lennox of Lonewoodlee, I presume, being so near a neighbour?" said Cyril.

"Of course ; all in the Merse know him for a crotchety old pump."

"That is not what I mean ; do you know him personally?" asked Cyril, with marked annoyance.

"A little."

"You visit there, probably?"

"Well—no—I cannot be said to do so," drawled Chesters, while he watched Cyril with half-closed eyes. "Who the deuce would go there, unless——"

"Unless what?"

"One went after the girl."

"Do you mean his daughter?" asked Cyril, swelling with secret anger.

"Certainly. I don't mean either of his two old female domestics. Pass the claret jug, please."

"I was a fool to accept this fellow's invitation," thought Cyril ; "I shall have a row with him yet, and I must forbid his visiting Lonewoodlee at all hazards, even if I declare myself to the old gentleman. I must take care of Mary, and watch over her if he cannot do so. That bill, too—Chesters would never be so liberal as to take it up without some ulterior purpose."

After a minute's silence, during which each had been covertly eyeing the other,

"You took up a bill of old Mr. Lennox's, I have heard," said Cyril, as if casually; "that was most kind and generous of you."

"Not at all—not at all; but who told you of it?"

"I forget—heard it incidentally somehow. Have you destroyed it?"

"No," replied Chesters, as he stuck his glass in his right eye and looked Cyril full in the face. "I have it here," he added, drawing from his breast pocket a handsome Russian leather case (girt with an elastic band), wherein he kept various odds and ends, I O U's, memoranda of races and coursing matches, with veterinary recipes, &c.; and taking the fatal slip of blue paper, showed it to Cyril, and replaced it in the pocket-book.

"It has been noted and protested!" exclaimed Cyril as a flush crossed his face. "Why did you not destroy it—what piece of cunning is this?"

"Come, come, Wedderburn, that is rather a harsh term. I had it noted and protested, because, although I took it, I cannot afford ultimately to lose the money. Have some more wine?"

Cyril Wedderburn shook his head.

"Come—one glass of Madeira, as a 'whitewasher,' and then I ring for coffee."

But Cyril rose from the table and would drink no more. His mind had become imbued by mistrust and suspicion; yet he felt a desire to obtain that bill if possible, and he might do so amid the play he had promised to have with Chesters; so after the bay hunter's good points had been fully discussed, after the stables, the gun-room, the billiard and smoking-rooms, had all been lounged through, in a snug little parlour, with a box of cigars, and some brandy-and-water beside them, they sat down to cards—an act of folly on the part of Cyril Wedderburn.

The monetary difficulties of Rooke Chesters were nearly as great as those of the so-called "proprietor" of Lonewoodlee; but he possessed the skill and the means of supplying his exchequer which the other had not. His carefully studied betting-book, his intimacy with most of the horsey men on the turf, his means of getting secret information, his sharp practice and dexterous hand with cards, billiards and dice, seldom failed to keep him in tolerable funds, though most of his land was mortgaged, and he had more than once sought the sanctuary of Holyrood when his difficulties had been greatest; and it was with this clever schemer that Cyril Wedderburn sat down to be regularly "plucked."

CHAPTER XI.

CHESTERS' "MILD PLAY."

LIKE many other apartments—even the bedrooms at Chesterhaugh, the little parlour was hung with pictures of lean, bony, gaunt horses, with little particoloured jockies perched on them; and Cyril, as he cast a glance at them, thought by contrast of the soft tender works by Greuze, the sombre Titians, the Raphaels, the Canalettis, and Correggios, which adorned the walls of Willowdean, interspersed with stately and creditable looking portraits of his forefathers, who had been all good men and true in the times of old.

Several packs of new cards, a dice-box, &c., were produced, and while carefully selecting a cigar each, cutting the ends thereof, and so forth, Cyril reverted to the subject of his favourite new horse.

"And so you like my bay hunter?"

"Amazingly! he has all the fine points of thoroughbred—an ample chest, compact body, broad loins, a small head and thin neck, the legs all bone and muscle; if with these he has the requisites of courage and temper——"

"I am sure he has both, though I have never tried him yet; but what the deuce shall I do with him if we go on foreign service?"

"You should have thought of that before buying him; but as the night is so cold, I would give him a warm mash with some nitre in it."

"A warm mash—why?"

"You came here at a rasping pace, and the animal may cool too much. I would have his eyes and nose spunged too, after your return."

"Do you think such necessary?" asked Cyril, with great simplicity. "I know you are a judge."

"Rather."

"I am somewhat ignorant of horses."

"Shall I ring for Trayner?"

"If you please."

Chester lit his cigar and rang the bell, but on hearing steps approaching, he rose, and said—

"I'll speak to Trayner myself about it: excuse me for a moment," and quitting the room he gave some instructions to the groom in an undertone. Cyril afterwards remembered hearing an expression of surprise escape the man, but little suspecting the vile trickery to which his horse and himself were about to be subjected; he began to think, that could he reconcile or explain away the affair of the bill, Chesters was perhaps "not

such a bad style of fellow, after all ;" and no doubt the brandy-and-water he was imbibing went far to strengthen this conclusion.

"I've made it all right about your nag," said Chesters, reseating himself at the table and fixing his glass in his right eye ; "and now for a little mild play—what is it to be, écarté or casino, or five-card cribbage ?"

"What say you to écarté ?"

"Well, Wedderburn, écarté be it—the regular gambler's game."

Chesters arranged the pack into thirty-two cards, withdrawing the twos, threes, fours, fives, and sixes.

"How many points shall we have ?" asked Chesters.

"Five. Cut for the deal."

They did so, and it fell to Chesters.

"Take another jorum of the brandy-and-water. Do you like those cigars ? I could spare you a hundred or so. Oh, no thanks at all : they are quite at your service. Three cards to you, and three to me."

While Chesters chatted thus, to throw the victim off his guard, the latter played in a careless manner that was usual with him, talking and smoking all the time, and quite unaware how the whole faculties of Chesters were absorbed in the game, which is one of a nature wherein foresight and nice calculation are of a necessity so requisite, and thus he was no match for his host, who, after permitting him to win two or three games at guinea points, proposed to increase the stakes to five guineas.

Now flushed with play, Cyril rashly assented, and the game went on.

"I mark the king !" said he. "By the way, that ring of yours, Chesters, is a splendid one."

"An onyx."

"So I see. Are those arms yours ?"

"No ; it belonged to that Frenchman, Louis De la Fosse, whom your father befriended. We played for it, and I won it."

"Did you actually take the poor fellow's ring ? A family relic, perhaps !"

"Well, I might have lost mine but for my superior play. Bravo ! that card plays out the four tricks."

"The world is apt to shake its head at such gaming as yours and his was."

"Pass the decanter. Deuce take the world and its head too ; though it shakes till palsied, what is it to me !" cried Chesters, laughing bitterly.

"But the world is censorious."

"So are all one's goodnatured friends—'d—d goodnatured

friends,' as Scott, I think, calls them. The Frenchman, De la Fosse, lost some thousands to me by backing no less than three losing horses at the Derby."

Cyril found that he had rapidly lost nearly two hundred pounds, and declined to play more.

"Not even to have your revenge?" asked Chesters, with feigned surprise, in which something of disdain was mingled.

"No," was the curt reply.

"Why, man alive, what do you mean?" asked Chesters, in a slightly bullying tone, with his glass shining in his eye.

"Simply that somehow, Captain Chesters, I do not like your mode of playing."

"Then we'll drop this and try casino: it is a good game for two."

"Agreed—five guinea stakes, as before."

They cut for the deal, which fell to Cyril; but though he won several games, which only served still further to flush and excite him, in the end he found he had no better luck than before; and ere long, instead of getting up Mr. Lennox's bill, he rose from the table minus two hundred and fifty pounds and had given his I O U for three hundred more. The time was close on midnight then, and he insisted on having his horse brought from the stables; so once more the acute Mr. William Trayner was summoned.

Already repenting deeply the extreme folly into which he had been lured by a man for whom he felt at heart only contempt, and resolving never more to pass the threshold of Chesterhaugh, Cyril—already pondering whether he would get the money lost from Robert or his doting mother—put on his riding gloves, took his whip, and descended the steps to where his bay horse stood in the starlight, champing on the bit and pawing the gravel with impatience.

Had he looked round at that moment, he might have detected a strange and unfathomable smile on the face of Chesters.

The horse seemed very restive, swaying away when he put his foot in the stirrup, so that he mounted with difficulty, and gathered up and shortened the reins.

"Allow me, for a moment," said Chesters; "there is something wrong about the curb chain, I think."

"The bridle's all right, sir," urged Trayner, who still held it in his hand, while Chesters very deliberately lengthened the straps a hole or two. "You'll do now, Wedderburn. Touch him with the spur. Good night."

"Good night; thanks," cried Cyril, and away his horse went like the wind; and he was barely clear of the lodge gate when he found the animal was totally unmanageable, and moreover had got the bit firmly between its teeth!

CHAPTER XII.

THE LAST OF THE BAY HUNTER.

"He is rightly named Rooke Chesters," muttered Cyril, as his horse began to caracole sideways along the high road, "for he has *rooked* me to some purpose. By Jove! I can never confess my folly to my father, after all his warnings too. Halloa, old nag, what is the matter with you?"

He now became sensible that his horse was becoming extremely restive; something was wrong with the bridle he knew, but the conduct of the animal rapidly became so outrageous that he feared to dismount lest it should kick him or run away, in which case he felt that he would cut a ridiculous figure before his own household, by arriving on foot and whip in hand without his nag. His father and brother he knew would quiz him unmercifully. Dismount! Pshaw! the idea was not to be thought of. So being a good horseman he kept his saddle, and endeavoured by every means, first to soothe, and then by the whip to control, the growing fury of the bay hunter, but strove in vain.

It was swelling, trembling, and panting with rage; its quivering ears lay backward flat, its head was outstretched, and its bloodshot eyes turned back, till at times he could see the white of them in the darkness.

After plunging and rearing, and endeavouring by every means to throw the rider, and after twice attempting to crush him against the park wall of Chesterhaugh, he suddenly flung out his forefeet, and with a fierce snort of rage, galloped at a terrible pace along the high road. The beautiful bay of which Cyril was so proud, as showing all the best points of a fine English hunter, seemed now changed into a tearing devil!

The curb chain was loose, the bit was clenched between its teeth, the reins were powerless, and Cyril Wedderburn could no more control its actions than he could rule a whirlwind.

Ploughed fields and gates, stackyards and farmsteadings, houses and cottages, all sunk in darkness, even as their inmates in sleep, were all passed with frightful speed, and seeking only to keep his seat till the animal became exhausted, Cyril trusted to his skill as a rider, and let the hunter take its way.

The open waste of Lonewoodlee, the dark thicket, and the quaint old Tower with its corner tourelles, were quickly at hand. As he swept past, Cyril saw the light in Mary's window: nay more, he saw her figure for an instant, and then it was that the irrepressible cry which Mary heard escaped him; for he had begun to fear that there was more than the warm mash fermenting in the interior of his maddened nag; that the

animal had been drugged, as there were few "horsey" tricks of which Ralph Rooke Chesters, and his man Bill Trayner, were ignorant.

As this exasperating conviction forced itself upon him, he conceived the idea of stunning the horse by a blow between the ears.

His riding whip had a ponderous silver handle, and with the thong twisted round his right hand, he dealt upon the hunter's head a downward stroke that might have felled an ox ; but instead of finding it sink beneath him as he confidently expected, so that he might leap from the saddle, a fresh gust of rage seemed to inspire the horse, which actually bounded from the earth, and snorting, panting, and quivering afresh, it went blindly and madly thundering onward in its fierce career.

This was at Falaknowe, where the whip which had dropped from his hand was afterwards found.

For a time he had thought that the horse might know its way home, and stop at the park-gate of Willowdean ; but gate and lodge had long been left behind, the woods and house of Renton too ; the rising ground beyond was soon devoured by the rapid hoofs, and Cyril might have said, with Mazeppa, as alarm gathered in his heart—

"All behind was dark and drear,
And all before was night and fear.
How many hours of night or day
In those suspended pangs I lay
I could not tell ; I scarcely knew
If this were human breath I drew—"

for before him were the impending bluffs of a rocky shore, and the dashing billows of the German Sea !

By stern use of his spurs, burying the sharp rowels in blood, he had forced the animal to clear by a flying leap more than one closed toll-gate ; but the idea pressed upon him, that if he lost his seat or was dashed on the hard road, to be found a bleeding mass of broken bones, of what the emotions of the mother who doted on him, of his tender Mary, of his ambitious father, and of all his friends would be, if he were brought home to Willowdean an unsightly corpse ; and now, as death seemed close and nigh, innumerable episodes of his past life—good, bad, and foolish—came thronging fast upon him, as he rode this terrible race. With these came a longing for vengeance upon Chesters, and a loathing of the infuriated brute that bore him. How he longed for a loaded pistol, that he might put a bullet through its head.

Cyril was an excellent horseman, and had always been a little vain of his riding ; but now he was becoming worn out.

After a twenty miles run, the horse had now left the high-

way, and was traversing one of those large fields (of some forty Scottish acres or so) that are peculiar to the Merse and West Lothian. It had been recently ploughed, and as the hunter's small hoofs and slender fetlocks sank deep amid the soft and loamy soil, while its panting and breathing grew harder, Cyril hoped that it was weary and would soon stop ; but the hope was vain.

Cyril's fingers were powerless with grasping the twisted reins of the useless bridle, and his arms ached and tingled to the shoulders with the long strain upon them ; his whole body trembled, and he felt that little now would dismount him, so fast and furious had been the career of his runaway steed, so many the leaps he had made over gates and walls of turf and stone, over high hedges and deep water-courses ; a regular steeplechase over everything that came in his way. The roughest hurdle-race was as nothing compared with it ; and now, we have said, before him lay the sea.

He knew the ground well, and the whole locality ; he had too often rambled there bird-nesting when a happy, heedless boy, and while hunting or shooting in manhood ; and he knew also every foot of that terrible shore from Eymouth to the Bridge of Dunglass ; and he was aware that at the end of the field he traversed there was no enclosure, no wall or hedge, no boundary but the giddy verge which overhung the sea that foamed some forty feet below. So now the time had come when he must cast himself from his saddle or perish.

He released his right foot from the stirrup-iron, but somehow omitted to clear the left so readily. In a moment he was on his back among the soft loamy furrows, and dragged furiously along ; the next, he felt himself shot fearfully through the air, which seemed to whiz upward past him.

"God—oh, God save me !" escaped him, while his mother's face, and Mary's too, flashed on his memory, with Mary's gentle voice and tender eyes, as he fell through space ; and ere he could again respire he found himself headlong in the midnight sea, with the black water closed above his head.

Panting he rose to the surface, but to sink again and again, for he was weak, powerless, and breathless ; yet being a good swimmer, when he rose the third time he kept himself afloat and looked around.

He was free from the fatal bay hunter now.

High over him towered a ridge of those black, beetling rocks which bound the shore and culminate in the cliffs of Fast Castle and those of St. Abb, covered with sea fowl, and with the foam of the German Ocean rolling against them. The moon, which had been hitherto veiled by a mass of clouds, now emerged from them, and as she was waning from amid the

ragged edges of the floating vapour, her light, cold, pale, and ghastly, shone along the tossing sea.

Even if he could have protracted his existence by swimming, in the end he must perish ; for all along that shore no footing place or sandy beach was nigh, and the waves, he feared too surely, would dash him on the bluffs a battered corpse.

Already his horse, with true instinct, had turned to the shore and swam through the billows, which dashed it again and again upon the wall of rock the slippery face of which it beat and pawed with its hoofs in vain to find a footing.

A mass of weedy and isolated rock some yards from that perilous shore caught the eye of Cyril in the moonlight. The waves boiled and seethed around but not *over* it. There he would find footing he hoped for a time, till daylight broke and his situation might be-seen from the land or the sea ; and with a prayer of thankfulness to Heaven in his heart and on his lips, he swam boldly and reached its slippery apex by grasping the seaweed that covered it.

Cold and drenched he sat there with the white waves seething round him ; and he could remember that many a time when he was a boy he had striven, by tossing stones from the cliff above, to hit this identical rock which now afforded him a temporary place of safety.

Ere long he felt sensible that the water was rising, that the tide was flowing inshore, and might in time, perhaps, cover the rock, in which case he was certain to be washed off and drowned.

The moon soon disappeared behind that stupendous rock which is crowned by the ruins of Fast Castle, and is inaccessible on all sides, save by a narrow neck of land, and then a double gloom seemed to fall upon the sea. About a mile off he could see a solitary light in the window of a house upon the shore, the light too probably of some watcher by a sick bed ; and wistfully and yearningly he regarded it, as he sat, or crouched rather, on that isolated rock, perishing miserably within a few miles of his splendid home.

There he knew that by this time all would be a-bed, after his father, his brother, and Horace Ramornie had had a few amicable strokes at billiards, and after his mother had grown weary of weaving out the future of the coming heiress ; and he knew that Gervase Asloane, the old butler, would be sleeping awaiting his return from Chesterhaugh.

One other light was visible for a time ; it was on board a large steamer about eight miles distant in the offing, where gradually it passed out of sight as she sped on her way to England or Holland.

To shout, Cyril knew was worse than useless ; few craft ever ventured near that iron shore, and there his voice would be heard by sea birds only.

Poor Cyril Wedderburn ! He had not been much given to prayer since he became a man of the world, or since he had last lisped his childish orisons at his mother's knee ; but now, in his hour of desperate need, he invoked God earnestly for deliverance from a death so early and so terrible as that which menaced him : and by a strange idiosyncrasy of the human mind, amid these pious thoughts, and amid the bewildering horrors of his situation, there occurred to his ear and his memory scraps of mess-room songs, of frivolous banter, and operatic airs, as if in grotesque mockery, till he feared he was going mad !

Suddenly a terrible cry—a cry that seemed to belong neither to Heaven nor earth—a cry altogether dissimilar to any other sound he had ever heard before, pierced his ears. Its singularity of tone made the pulses of his heart stand still. Were the tales he had heard of the water kelpy, and his shrieks of triumph over the drowning, true after all ?

No other sound followed but the monotonous dashing of the waves, the hiss of the surf upon the rocks, and the voices of the now startled sea birds as they were roused from their nests by that unearthly yell.

It was the death scream of his drowning horse ; for a horse, when in extremity of terror, can utter a dreadful cry at times ; and now its body floated passively in the eddy round a wave-beaten promontory, the sport of the billows, and Cyril, with little regret certainly, saw it tossed to and fro in the starlight, till it disappeared, and that was the last he saw of his fatal bay hunter !

And now another deep invocation of God escaped him, for he became assured that slowly, but steadily and terribly, the rising tide was closing round him !

CHAPTER XIII.

GRIEF.

IN his exciting conversation with Mary, worthy Squills, the village doctor, had not over-rated the grief and consternation which the great catastrophe excited among the bereaved family at Willowdean. "There are days in some lives which are so full of pain that no term of after years, no joy or peace of after-granting, can enable us to think of them without a shudder, even to the last hour of existence." So was it with Lady Wedderburn then, on that black fatal day, and for many a day after, when memory went back to the terrible shock her nervous system had received.

Accustomed from her infancy to all the perfect repose and

care that wealth, position, and prosperity so frequently inspire, this calamity seemed beyond all her power of realization as a fact!

The absence of Cyril from the formal morning prayer read by Sir John (the Wedderburns were rather High Church), and from breakfast, excited no great surprise; and when it was reported from the stable-yard that neither he nor his horse the famous bay had come home last night, the natural conclusion of the family circle was that he had been pressed to remain at Chesterhaugh, and would doubtless ride home in time for the family luncheon; but Sir John, who disliked some of Rooke Chesters' proclivities, particularly his proneness to gamble, was surprised that his son (usually so careful and fastidious in his acquaintanceships) should so far tax that person's hospitality.

When Lady Wedderburn, in her gay little dressing-room, was in deep consultation with Miss Flora M'Caw about her style of mourning for her Uncle William, of Madras, and the proper sets of jewellery, jet, silver, or gold, to be worn therewith, and also when the season for second mourning arrived, the startling tidings came, in the form of a vague rumour at first, that her son Cyril had left Chesterhaugh about midnight, and had now been absent, unaccounted for, none knew where or how, for twelve hours!

For one so extremely regular in all his habits and so temperate in conduct, this seemed incomprehensible, and every hopeful, vague, and wild surmise was indulged in only to culminate at last in the fear of some terrible accident or outrage, and yet the people of the district were peaceful and orderly.

Then, as the Doctor had related to Mary, Horace Ramornie, and all the household, assisted by friends and neighbours, set forth to search the country. His hat was found at Buncle-edge, and his whip at Falaknowe, five miles nearer the sea; but Lady Juliana Ernescleugh sent her son, the Master, with the darkest tidings of all, that Cyril's well-known bay hunter had been discovered drowned, and fearfully bruised and battered, among the rocks eastward of Fast Castle, and then the conviction that a dreadful calamity, the details of which were incomprehensible, had taken place.

The Coastguard were set to work, the shore was searched, and, save where the rocks were impassable or inaccessible, every creek and cranny were examined between Broxmouth and the Redheugh shore; a fleet of fisherboats dragged all the water in the vicinity, but all their seeking was vain.

No further trace was found of Cyril.

The telegraphs were at work, with descriptions of his person and clothing, and rewards were offered for information, with no

better success, and thus four days of agonizing suspense and horror were passed by the family at Willowdean.

All the servants sorrowed for Cyril, the feminine portion especially; he was so handsome, and always so smiling and suave; and old Gervase Asloane, on whose back he had ridden many a time when a boy, wept for him, and Miss Flora M'Caw wept too. Solitary, and of a necessity selfish though her life had been, she felt genuine grief for the loss of so fine a young man, and recalled the secret hopes and tender passion in which she had once ventured to indulge when the heir of Willowdean was in his mere boyhood, in the time that seemed so long past now.

Messages and cards of condolence poured in from friends and neighbours; and among others came a black-edged note, per Mr. Bill Trayner, from Rooke Chesters, expressing profound sorrow for the untoward event, and enclosing Cyril's I O U for three hundred pounds, which "he hoped Sir John Wedderburn would find it convenient to liquidate, as he was just about to travel."

"Oh, detestable taste!" exclaimed Horace Ramornie, with a flush of anger and contempt on his handsome face; but Sir John, though his brown, manly hand trembled the while, signed a cheque for the amount, and enclosed it to Chesters without a word of comment.

He then looked sadly at the I O U, the last words, no doubt, his son's hand had traced, and with a sigh threw it into the fire.

When the second and third day passed, Lady Wedderburn was too ill to leave her bed, and it required all the skill of Doctor Squills, and all the solace of Miss M'Caw, with the aid of camphor, sal-volatile, and Rimmel's vinegar, to save her from a succession of fainting fits.

Cyril was gone—gone for ever!

These words seemed ever in her heart and on her lips, and to be written, as it were, in letters of fire upon the wall, and this feeling seemed to fill the air around her. The stunning sense of her bereavement was most keen in the wakeful hours of the night and of the early morning. Then it seemed to rush like a flood upon her. Never more would her slender fingers run caressingly through his rich dark hair; never more would his soft and beautiful, yet manly eyes, turn affectionately to hers; never again would his voice, always so sweetly modulated when addressing her, fall upon her listening ear.

A lonely girl at Lonewoodlee was full of exactly similar thoughts, sorrows, and memories; yet those of the bereaved mother were perhaps the deepest—the most keen and the hardest to bear. Cyril was her first-born—the apple of her eye.

To her he was beautiful as Absalom was to David, and as she thought of that, she repeated in her heart—

“Oh Absalom, my son, my Absalom,
Would to God my life would ransom thine!”

Had Lady Wedderburn seen Mary Lennox then, and known the common cause of their grief, she might have forgiven and even loved her; but she had never yet connected the idea of Mary with her son.

When Cyril was absent with his regiment—the Fusileers—the sight of his empty chair, his vacant place at table, always inspired her with sadness; but she knew that he was no longer a boy, and could not be kept for ever by her side. Now his place would ever more be vacant, or filled by a terrible shadow—an unseen presence only. Even his grave she would never look upon; and every relic of Cyril—the portrait painted of him, as a cherry-cheeked boy ensign, in his first red coat and epaulettes, with pipe-clayed belt and black bearskin; the lock of his hair which had never left her bosom since he joined his regiment, then warring on the banks of the Sutledge; his unused books, his bed, the soft cambric pillow-case his cheek had touched, his favourite meerschaum pipe, lying where he had last left it—all became as something sacred in her eyes, and inspired her with bursts of the most passionate grief.

The schemes she had been so fondly forming for his aggrandizement, by marriage with his rich cousin who was coming home, were all forgotten now; and in the bewilderment of her grief she almost forgot to pray. Poor Lady Wedderburn was stupefied; and the snow of that sudden storm which imprisoned Mary Lennox at Chesterhaugh added, while it lasted on hill and moor, double desolation to her heart, for the gloom of the weather adds keenly to the grief of the imaginative and impressionable.

Where was now the future she had pictured, with Cyril's children crowing and nestling upon her knee? Robert, her younger son—the future Baronet—yet was left to her; but at present all her sorrows, tears, and regrets were for the lost one.

CHAPTER XIV.

AN UNWELCOME VISITOR.

“THE fifth day, and no news of him yet—no trace, save the dead horse! By Jove! what *can* have happened? I meant only to break a few of his bones, or spoil his pretty face, perhaps, for Mary, and nothing more. Where the devil can he have

drifted to—the coast of Holland perhaps? Handsome of the old boy to cash up the I O U. Wish it had been for six hundred, though?”

Thus thought Ralph Rooke Chesters, when on the afternoon of the fifth day—on Monday—after the disappearance of Cyril he dismounted at Lonewoodlee, under the door which bore the quaint legend, and presenting his card, asked for Miss Lennox.

“Miss Lennox was at home,” Alison said, and ere long she received him in the gloomy apartment which passed for her drawing-room, with its chintz-covered furniture, its chiffonnières of painted wood, its old-fashioned girandoles, and the meagre finery of her mother’s bridal days, to which her own eyes had become accustomed. Her piano stood open, for though her heart was full of grief, she had been compelled to sing and play to amuse her father.

“To what do I owe the—the pleasure of this visit?” said Mary, politely yet coldly, for the memory of yesterday’s snare haunted her unpleasantly, and secretly she resented it.

“My anxiety lest you should have suffered from the snow (now nearly gone, by-the-bye) and the cold drive in an open waggonette,” replied Chesters, with as soft a smile as his face could assume.

“Thanks ; I am well,” said Mary, still more coldly, for there was something in the manner of Chesters which inspired doubt and dislike. Yet he placed his hat on the table, brushed a speck off his tweed knickerbockers with his handkerchief, and quietly seated himself with the air of a man who meant to remain.

“And the old gentleman. How is he?”

“As usual,” sighed Mary ; “very weak and ailing. I know not with what ; and I don’t think that Doctor Squills knows either.”

“Get some other skill than this cub of a parish doctor possesses. Send to town—to London or Edinburgh.”

But Mary shook her head and sighed again as she thought of their slender means ; and there was a pause, during which she hoped that he would soon go, as she had to be at the railway station at a certain hour to receive certain medicines which the Doctor had ordered from Edinburgh for her father’s use.

She was conscious that Chesters was regarding her earnestly : indeed he had been unable to get out of his evil mind the effect of her pretty and ladylike little figure while she sat so many hours in his dining-room last night ; so he had come in the prosecution of his nefarious suit ; but old as he was in the ways of the world he lived in, he felt an awkwardness in his mode of advancing it ; for Mary looked so provokingly calm and composed, and so exquisitely ladylike ; her beautifully dressed hair

so gorgeous in colour and quantity, with her plain but perfect toilet, and her only ornament, a simple brooch, nestling at her pretty neck.

To Mary's eye he looked older to-day and less careful in his costume ; his nose was certainly redder, and the blotches on his cheeks were deeper in colour ; his watchful and sinister grey eyes were more restless in expression, and it soon became evident that he had been imbibing freely, though the day was yet young. Wine, or something worse, alone could have made him depart from his policy of yesterday and blunder on as he did while the young girl's grief was so fresh and keen.

He rose, and coming close to the chair in which she was seated, laid his hand on the back of it, touching her rounded shoulder as he did so ; and lowering his voice, he said—

"Miss Lennox ; or may I call you Mary?"

"Yes, if you choose. You have known me since I was a mere child."

"I have served in India since then," said he, with an ill-concealed grimace ; for he winced at the remark, or what it inferred ; and oblivious of the tender scene he had witnessed in the thicket, and the grief which filled her heart, he said—

"I am come to ask you if you will allow me to love you, Mary Lennox?"

"I can neither prevent people from loving or hating me," she replied, evasively ; for she remembered the bill which he possessed ; the power it gave him over her father, and she trembled in her heart.

"Ah, Mary, who could hate you?" he whispered, bending still nearer her face.

"But I beg that you will not speak of love to me."

"Why?"

"For a reason I care not to give. Pray let that suffice," urged Mary, as she bit her lip and kept her pale face averted to hide the tears with which her eyes were filled.

"Then you love another?" said Chesters, bluntly.

"That is my affair, sir."

"But you do ; or shall I say, *did*."

"As you please," replied the girl, wearily, shrugging her shoulders, and her words seemed to come from her heart.

"At least, I have a kind of admission from your own lips," he resumed, with a half-muttered imprecation under his sandy grey moustache, and with a dangerous gloom in his false and sinister eyes. "But do you know your own mind?"

"I trust that I do," was the gentle reply.

"You are right to speak doubtfully."

Mary changed her seat to the other side of the fireplace ; for, as his face came nearer hers, a kind of shiver passed over her.

"I do not understand you, Captain Chesters," said she, haughtily, as she erected her pretty head, and looked at him intently and steadily.

"I say you are right to speak doubtfully, for at your years a girl scarcely knows her own mind," he resumed more tenderly, again drawing near her and attempting to take her hand. "It is quite possible to love one person at one time, and another much more at a future time ; and thus you might love me. Who is the writer that says, 'we may love with but a part of our nature—for the heart must love something—until we chance upon a being our every nature sympathizes with ; one that will awaken new faculties to love with ; one that we can love with all the love we gave the first, with still more added—a being made for us, and us alone.'"

Chesters poured out this quotation at a breath, for he was sensible that his utterance was becoming thicker, and a smile of disdain passed over Mary's face.

"I don't know who the writer is," said she, with growing irritation, as she rang the bell, "but it all sounds very French—like some of the maxims of Jean Jacques Rousseau. One thing I am sure of, Captain Chesters ; my nature would never sympathise with yours, and I could never—pardon me for saying so—marry a man old enough to be my father."

Chesters ground his teeth at this reply, and a little hollow and bitter laugh escaped him ; for with all his open and secret admiration of Mary, which was genuine enough—as the charms of her person and manner were undeniable—a marriage with her formed no part of his plans. He was about to renew the subject, when old Alison appeared, in answer to the summons of her young mistress, who said—

"Ask, please, if my papa feels well enough to see Captain Chesters."

"He has just been inquiring for him, Miss."

"Good. Come with me, Captain Chesters, if you are so disposed. Papa sees so few, that your visit will be quite an event."

Now Chesters, with all his suavity and plausibility, when he had an object in view, could rarely give much sympathy to any one or anything, and above all, he hated the boredom of illness or sickness in himself or others, felt just then only anger at the quick mode in which Mary cut short his intrusive love-making ; but he bowed, and followed her into the room where poor Oliver Lennox lay in the bed from which, it was too probable, he would never rise. The oppressive odour of the sick room in such a chill season, and in such a house, where the walls were of such enormous thickness, was unpleasantly perceptible to Chesters, and had the result of making his recent potations more seriously affect his brain.

However, being withal a well-bred man, he shook the thin wan hand of Mr. Lennox with apparent cordiality, made the usual polite but conventional inquiries about his health, and received the same unmeaning and querulous replies, which he had heard a score of times in the same place.

Weak and worn though he was, could Oliver Lennox but have seen into Chester's heart, and read the plans he cherished there, he would have smote him by his bedside!

Propped on pillows which his daughter's tender hand had arranged, Mr. Lennox, looking twenty years older than his time of life warranted, had been lying the whole forenoon with his clear blue restless eyes bent on the muirland scene that stretched for miles away before his window—the acres upon acres that were no longer his own; acres won and held by his forefathers in the old stirring times of Scottish raids and wars.

The snow of the unexpected storm had already disappeared; the day really looked like one in spring; the sky a deep blue; the air soft and ambient. The bulb roots were expanding amid the prepared mould in Mary's little garden on the southern side of the Tower; the primroses and wild violets were cropping up beneath the sprouting hedgerows; the grass looked greener on the lonely hill sides and in the meadows, over which the shadows of the clouds were passing quickly; and even the bleak Lammermuir looked less bleak than was its wont; for the day was of a kind to make one feel content for the present, hopeful for the future, and prayerful to God.

Oliver Lennox felt its genial influence in his own fatuous way; but not so his daughter, for her heart was rent by anguish for the loss of Cyril, and mortification for the annoyance which the suit of Chesters occasioned her.

"How kind of you to come and see an old broken-down fellow such as I am," said the invalid, turning his sharp aquiline face to his visitor, and presenting his hand for a second time.

"Not at all, my good friend. Glad to see you looking so well. Egad! I shouldn't wonder to see you in the saddle again, scouring across the country—the leading man in the field."

But Mr. Lennox only shook his head and sighed despondingly, while Mary felt disgust for the untrue sympathy of Chesters, who stood sucking the ivory handle of his whip, while she rearranged with her quick hands the pillows under her father's head.

"It was just on such a breezy March day as this I hunted last, Chesters," said the invalid, with a sad smile. "We all came at a slapping pace through Oxendean, and round Buncle-edge, till, oddly enough, a bed of sweet violets and primroses—only think of it!—in Renton Wood quite threw the hounds off the scent, and the fox escaped! Since that day Oliver Lennox

has never been in the hunting field, or backed but an old Gal-loway cob."

"Take courage. There is a good time coming, as the song has it."

"My Mary is the veritable 'Brownie' of Lonewoodlee, who cooks and watches in the night, and all that, so I should not repine," said Mr. Lennox, with a fond smile, as he played with her snowy and statuesque fingers; "but her unwearying love, and all her tender kindness cannot avert fate, or hide the outstretching of the Shadowy Hand."

"Oh, papa, do not—do not pierce my heart!" implored the girl.

"How much more of life is there in this old grumbler yet?" thought Chesters, as he actually gnawed the whip-handle with his teeth, while watching admiringly the contour of Mary's bust, the taper form of her white arms, and the high arch of her instep, as she hung about her father's bed.

"You will be kind to her, Chesters, when I am gone," said Lennox, in his usual querulous way; and the request was so much in unison with Chesters' own thoughts, that the blotches deepened to scarlet in his face.

"Kind to her, Mr. Lennox?" he faltered.

"Yes. I leave so few friends behind me now, that Mary's future fills my heart with intense anxiety."

"Papa dearest, fear not for me," said Mary, becoming deeply agitated.

"Had your brother Harry but been spared—"

"Don't talk of poor Harry, papa," urged Mary, as her father's mind was apt to wander then, and to confound the past and the present together; "do not talk thus, papa, when strangers are present. You may live I hope and trust for many years to come. 'God alone decides who shall live to suffer, or who shall suffer and die.' I, perhaps, may be one of the latter."

A scarcely perceptible gesture of impatience escaped Chesters; but slight though it was, the quick eye of the invalid detected it.

"Well, I daresay I weary you. Take Chesters into the dining-room, Mary, and give him a glass of Madeira, or brandy-and-water, after the ride. I always took a horn after a gallop in my day—the day that will never come again. Lonewoodlee had ever a name for hospitality, and it shall not lose it while I am above the turf, lassie."

"Thanks: then we shall adjourn to the dining-room," said Chesters, and glad to escape from the sick chamber, he shook the hand of Oliver Lennox, and ere long found himself in the sombre little dining-hall, seated on one of the square-elbowed haircloth sofas, and looked down upon by a few faded and gloomy portraits of the Lennoxes of past times, in wigs, wide

cuffs, and pasteboard skirts, or breastplates of steel, just as Lely, Ramsay, or Medina had depicted them; and somehow he thought that in all the faces of these dead men he could read something of scorn and scrutiny, so his eye avoided them, and he applied himself to mixing a stiff glass of brandy-and-water, while Mary hovered irresolutely near. She was all anxiety that he should depart, for in an hour now the train would be in, and she wished to receive in person the medicines that were coming for her father. She dreaded also to mention her errand or purpose, lest he might offer to accompany her, and give the affliction of yet more of his society.

But Chesters found himself perfectly comfortable. His dinner-time was three hours distant yet; the brandy-and-water proved quite to his taste—so, too, was Mary—thus he at once resumed the thread of their conversation, but in a more jocular, or as Mary justly deemed it, more insolent tone; for helplessness and friendlessness encouraged this *vaurien*, while her rare beauty inspired his worst passion.

“Ah, Mary, we might be so jolly if you would only learn to love me a little.” Then becoming maudlinly sentimental, he proceeded to quote Shelley—

“See the mountains kiss high Heaven,
And the waves clasp one another;
No sister flower will be forgiven,
If it disdain its brother.
And the sunbeams kiss the earth:
And the moonbeams the sea.
What are all those kissings worth,
If thou kiss not *me*?”

“The order of that line should be reversed; but, by Jove, my voice is getting quite feathery!”

He was becoming inarticulate, and almost tipsy.

“Captain Chesters,” said Mary, gravely, “do not go on thus, I implore you! You would pity me if you knew all—the horror of living alone, or nearly alone, in this dreary house; my sole occupation the sad, sad one——”

“Of what?” said he, as tears choked her utterance.

“Soothing and amusing a dying father.”

“Oh bosh! my dear girl,” was the coarse response; “the old fellow may live long enough yet; and I am sure that he would rather have me for a son-in-law—I who know so thoroughly the points of a horse and the secrets of the turf—a thoroughbred sportsman, who could take the county pack in hand, and, had I the means, would hunt the Merse and Lauderdale as they never were hunted before—than yonder mooning fellow from whom you parted in the thicket on the night he disappeared. Ah, you sly puss, you little knew that I saw you there!”

Mary felt herself grow deadly pale, and then she flushed to the temples with anger, as these rude and almost fiercely spoken remarks, so wounding to her delicacy, fell on her sensitive ear. Again her hand went to the bell for the purpose of having Chesters shown to the door at all hazards of the future, but ere she could ring Alison Home's hard and wrinkled visage appeared, and she announced that "Captain Chesters' servant, Trayner, wished to speak with him immediately."

"Send him up then," said Chesters sulkily. "Most singular, this! What the deuce can the fellow want with me? I left him in the stables."

"He says, sir, that he has something for your private ear," replied the greyhaired domestic.

Now Chesters had so many strange involvements, and so many secrets to keep, that he very palpably changed colour on hearing this, and felt compelled to go to his servant, who had dismounted at the door, and was now dressed in livery, with an orthodox cockade and brown leather belt.

Mary only heard Chesters utter a fierce exclamation of astonishment in reply to a communication made by Trayner, who was coolly smoking one of his master's cigars, concerning "Willowdean and a telegram;" and then, without the courtesy of returning to bid her adieu, or making any explanation whatever, her unwelcome visitor rode off towards Chesterhaugh, accompanied by his servant; and Mary could see from her window that as they galloped along the road they were side by side and in close and rapid conversation.

About what?

CHAPTER XV.

THE SPRING EVENING.

ERE the night fell and the moonlight paled out on the Lammermuirs and on the sea, Mary was fated to hear what this secret communication was!

"What had happened at Willowdean—what was the nature of the telegram?" she asked of her own heart and of Alison in vain; the discovery of Cyril's body in the sea, or cast upon the shore perhaps, and even she who loved him so, yea as her own soul, dared not ask permission to look upon his pallid face again!

This conviction was a great, a bitter, and a mortifying grief! Well, well, if the world were going to pieces, she knew that she must attend to the health and wants of her father, and on looking at her watch, she found that she had not a moment to lose if she would be at the station when the train from the

North came in. She tied on her smart hat and veil, took her tiny muff, and set forth.

She might have sent Alison Home, but she had a craving to be a little abroad in the open air, for the atmosphere of the house seemed to stifle her, and there were times when the clamorous fluttering of her heart amounted to agony, and when she felt as one in a dream—one enduring sorrows not her own, but those of another.

She passed the thicket and the stile where she had been wont to meet *him* in the evening, and she glanced at both wistfully. No need was there now to wait with anxious heart to watch the clock, or wonder whether papa would be asleep, awake, or fretful when the time for trysting came. All was ended now! and yet as she looked at the rude steps of the stone stile, grey and spotted with lichens, it seemed to her as if she could, in her mind's eye, trace the outline of her handsome and winning lover's figure, waiting for her as of old—as he had waited only five days ago—her lost Cyril.

Never more! Oh, how much of sadness, of bitterness, and hopelessness, do these two words contain!

Save in a few hollow places on the hill sides, the snow of the preceding night had totally disappeared. The sunset deepened into a warm and russet glow on the summits of the pastoral hills, the air was balmy, and the chirping of the birds came clearly upon it, with the voices of children from a distance. The green buds were swelling in the hedgerows, and near a cottage which had once been a lodge of Lonewoodlee (now let to a cotter) she saw a group of rosy, barelegged "bairns" peeping with wonder into the first bird's nest of the season, which some unwary sparrow had built in the cleft of an open bush. The rooks were cawing aloft, the brown hares were gliding among the glistening furrows of the freshly ploughed fields, or "mains" as they are named in the Merse; there was a fragrance and odour of verdure in the air, and though the month is usually a rude and boisterous one, Mary, as she walked rapidly on, could not be insensible of the genial influence of spring.

Pausing at times, she looked fondly and sadly back to the gloomy old Tower, the tourelles, bartizan, and stone roof of which stood out so darkly against the bright blue evening sky. There, in the stirring times of old, by the Border Laws, or *Leges Marchiarum*, her forefathers had been compelled to keep a watch with alarm-bell and fire-pan, to give warning to the North, to Soltra and Dunsper, when the English crossed the Tweed or entered the Merse, and now their descendants trembled at the approach of an angry creditor! How long would her dwelling be there, and where would be her home

when—but she thrust *that* thought aside as too painful, and hastened on.

She passed ere long the handsome modern gate and Grecian lodge of Willowdean, the pillared peristyle and white façade of which she could see at a distance between the trees of the park (or chase, it might be called in England), and an irrepressible sob escaped her for one who would never more be under its roof; and thus, with the tears welling but unseen beneath her closely tied veil, she entered the market town of Willowdean, which owed its existence and prosperity to the Wedderburns.

It is a quaint old Scottish Burgh or Barony, and was so long before the union of the kingdoms, remaining very much unchanged for more than a century after, and singularly so, as in Scotland nothing stands, for there whatever fails to “go ahead” must decline and pass away, like many of the burghs of Fife. It has stood almost unchanged, even by the railway, save for the erection of a few gayer shops and taverns—unchanged in its general aspect since Queen Mary made her famous ride to Hermitage, and from its aspect, its cross—a slender shaft of stone surmounted by a moulded unicorn—its kirk, and crow-stepped gables abutting on the street, its quaint outshots and turnpike stairs, one might expect to see the mailed knights of Mary, or buff-coated troopers of Leslie, fresh from Marston Moor, drinking at the market well, or “chaffing” the girls at the grated windows of the houses, some of which still show the iron crosses of St. John of Jerusalem.

The town once boasted of a castle, but after being burned by some Northumberland raiders in the time of Charles II., it has dwindled down to a few vaults and a green mound, the favourite resort of the children for games and play. Willowdean still boasts of a parochial barn, called a kirk, where God is worshipped according to the cold and stern form ordained in 1559 by the Lords of the Congregation, when Mary of Guise was Regent of the realm, enlightened Scottish lords who could barely make their mark like an Irish navvy, and who (could such an investment have been made) would have sold their fathers' skins to Queen Elizabeth.

This church had, however, attached to it the Gothic fragment of an older fane, still called the Lennox Aisle, and there lay most of the forefathers of her who now entered the street afoot, and sick and sad at heart.

To many of the “burgh merchants” in that little town was her father in debt, yet everywhere did Mary meet with respect; all touched their hats to her, for the memory of her father's open-handed youth was a popular one: and in a place so sequestered and out of the route of the tourist, even in fast-changing and radical Scotland, some more respect is paid at

times to the representative of an old family than might be accorded to a wealthy *parvenu*, and all the more readily when the said representative is a lovely young girl like Mary Lennox.

In the middle of the street—the town has but one, with a few thatched closes or alleys diverging therefrom—she encountered a group of little children dancing hand-in-hand and singing in chorus one of those local rhymes which are so peculiar to the Lowlands, as they came merrily along, enumerating, to an air of their own, several localities, thus—

“Braw Bughtrig and braw Belchester,
Leetholm and the Peel;
The lad wha gets a wife frae there
Will ever do weel;
But better far in Willowdean,
And bonnier will he see,
If he'll ride further up the muir,
Unto the Lonewoodlee.”

Then, as they suddenly perceived and recognised Miss Lennox, the little creatures blushed and curtsied; and, but for the chronic sadness of her heart, Mary could have smiled at the old rhyming compliment to the alleged beauty of the ladies of her family.

At last she reached the railway station, of which no description is necessary, as such edifices bear a strong family resemblance all over Europe. There were the same liveried porters loitering about that one sees everywhere; passengers with labelled luggage awaiting the up-train or the down-train; the book-stall, with its inevitable rows of yellow, green, or red novels, *Punch*, and the *Illustrated News*.

Mary had not long to wait. With a shrill and vicious whistle, the train for England swept out of the tunnel, a long pennant of smoke streaming behind, and its crimson lamps flaming like the eyeballs of a demon in front, for the twilight had deepened to the gloaming now. Clang went the bell, the engine “slowed,” and, amid the bustle, the opening and slamming of doors, the production and notching of tickets, the choice of seats and stowal of luggage, the darting of the thirsty into the refreshment-room, and so forth—for all had to be adjusted and the train off in five minutes, if it would avoid the express for Berwick—Mary looked in vain for the familiar face of the friendly guard who frequently did her little services, and who was to bring her the important packet from town.

The man on duty this evening was a total stranger to her.

“A packet for you, Miss?” said he, in reply to her inquiries. “What is the name?”

“For Mr. Lennox, of Lonewoodlee.”

"It was given to a gentleman in the train ; he offered to take charge of it."

"By whom?"

"The other guard, to whom he seemed well known, and to whom he offered in person to deliver it."

"Singular ; a gentleman !" exclaimed Mary, in vague alarm that the long-expected packet might be lost or stolen.

"Yes, Miss ; a regular gentleman, for he gave me a crown when smoking in the van."

"But where is he?"

"Yonder, on the platform, Miss. Seats, gentlemen, seats !" and cutting short the conversation, the bustling official hurried away, touching the brass-lined peak of his cap.

Clang went the doors and the bell ; the engine panted and screamed, the train glided away, and Mary went towards the gentleman indicated by the guard. He was speaking in an animated manner to a few of the loiterers on the platform, who had formed a group about him, and Mary fancied that he *had* a small sealed packet in his hand.

Irresolute about addressing him, she lingered for a moment, till something in his air and manner stirred a secret chord in her heart, which vibrated painfully, and a low cry escaped her lips, when the handsome face, with the well-known moustache and tender loving eyes of the lost one, was turned towards her !

"Cyril !" she exclaimed, and would have fallen, but that his arm was instantly thrown around her.

"Mary—Mary Lennox !"

It was he, but looking paler and thinner, and strangely attired ; and they met thus abruptly amid a group of people on the open and most prosaic of places—a railway platform !

Great though his excitement, Cyril Wedderburn had that horror of a "scene" natural to every well-bred Briton, and rapidly recovering his consciousness of the necessity for appearing calm and unmoved, he lifted his hat, and said—

"Take my arm, Miss Lennox : allow me to see you out of this place. I have here the packet addressed to your father. I hope to hear that he is better. Good evening, gentlemen and friends ; thanks for all your kind wishes and congratulations."

He drew Mary's arm through his, waved his hat to the people who had recognized and crowded about him on the platform, welcoming his return—resuscitation, what you will—with a genuine cheer that died away in a buzz of speculation and wonder, for the Wedderburns were deservedly popular in the district ; and then he led away Mary, who was in a state of intense bewilderment, for much of utter terror was mingled with her joy, so that her steps tottered as they left the station and proceeded through the street of Willowdean, where the windows

of the little shops were beginning to be lit with feeble gas, or still more feeble candles, and from thence out upon the familiar highway that stretched beyond.

CHAPTER XVI.

A HAPPY WALK HOME.

"CYRIL," exclaimed Mary, in a low but piercing voice, while she clung to her lover's arm; "in the name of mercy and for the love of blessed Heaven, explain all this terrible mystery!"

"Oh, my darling, my darling, how pale and wan you look!" he exclaimed, as he lifted her veil and kissed her tenderly.

"And you too, Cyril. But speak of yourself, not me," she added, dropping her head wearily on his breast, and giving way to a passionate fit of weeping. "What has happened to you, where have you been, and how have you returned in so sudden and unexpected a manner, from the grave—from the very grave, as it seems to me? I have wept and mourned for you as one who was numbered with the dead! Oh, the horror, the black, indescribable horror of those days and nights now past!"

"My tender, loving Mary!"

"Oh, Cyril, hold me up. I feel as if I could die just now—the shock of joy is so, so great to see you again; to hear your voice, for the sound of which I have longed in a species of silent, gasping yearning, that no words can describe, and which God alone knows!"

"So have I longed for you, Mary," said he, in a broken accent, for her words and the tone of her voice moved him deeply, as it had in it that wonderful *tremolo* which added so much to its power.

Oh, was it real, and not a dream?—each asked of their hearts—this clinging and gasping embrace in which they both indulged for a time, in a happy, happy silence, too deep for words.

After a pause, Cyril said—

"I telegraphed to my brother Robert that I should arrive by this train, and asked him or Horace Ramornie to meet me with the trap or carriage, and drive me home; but there must have been some mistake, for neither are here, which is lucky, as I shall have the unexpected joy of a walk home with you, my darling Mary, my wee wife, who, strange to say, has been the first to greet me!"

So this must have been the telegram referred to by Trayner in his rapid communication to Chesters, who, in the true spirit

of jealousy, fear, or malevolence, had ridden off, without mentioning it to her.

"Surely you would not have left *me* another night in grief and suspense?" said Mary, plaintively.

"Not another hour! I telegraphed to the family at Willowdean, first, of my safety; and again that I was to be home by the evening train. I meant to have gone to Lonewoodlee by the way, my excuse for doing so being this packet, which I should have left for you, with a sufficient message, if we had failed to meet."

"But the mystery, Cyril—the mystery of your story; tell me all!" she implored, with a heart full of love and natural curiosity.

In a few words he rapidly sketched all the adventures of the night on which he disappeared—adventures he would yet have to detail to many a listener, but to few that would listen so lovingly and breathlessly as poor Mary Lennox—horrors that were to come back in many a dream! He told of his dining at Chesterhaugh; of the night spent in rash gambling there; of his desire, but failure, to get possession of her father's bill; and then how his horse had proved first restive and afterwards mad, and completely ungovernable; of the fierce race by Buncleedge and Falaknowe—a ride like that of the Wild Huntsman of German renown—till he was borne right into the sea; of the narrow escape he had from being dashed to pieces; but how, by the aid of kind Providence, he had reached the fragment of isolated rock, and sat there in cold and misery, with the moon waning, the night deepening, and the tide rising round him, while all hope of reaching the land by swimming was futile, as the cliffs rose sheer like a wall from the sea, which was rolling with a mighty force against them; and Mary heard all this, with hands clasped upon his arm, with exclamations of compassion and dismay, with her eyes full of tears, and her parted lips revealing her closely set little teeth.

He described, that around him there wheeled flights of the snow-white solan goose, the black guillemot, the grey gull, and other sea birds; and that once there came a seal—a seadog, as the Scottish fishermen name it—which swam in circles round the rock, with its bullet-shaped head, black glittering eyes, and two fore-paws alone visible, as it paddled about; and often the memory of that incident came back in dreams, for he had envied the animal its amphibious nature, while the rising tide flowed over his feet and legs; and often, in the same visions of night, came back the sounds he had heard when there—the gurgling, the hissing, and the surging of the sea, as the ridgy waves succeeded each other in unvarying rage, round the rock on which he sat and against the cliffs that beetled over him.

Mary shuddered and shed many a tear while she listened, though Cyril appeared to speak somewhat lightly of the affair, as "a devil of a spill—an awful mess—a narrow escape," and so forth.

The strange weird scream of his dying horse was ultimately the means of saving him. It had been heard to seaward on board of a small fishing smack, the skipper of which lay to, and sent his little boat in shore to discover whence that unearthly cry proceeded; and two men who rowed it, and whose superstitious fears inspired them with the utmost unwillingness for the duty, fortunately descried Cyril by the starlight, and were just in time to save him. He swam off towards them, and was taken on board the smack, speechless with cold and exhaustion.

The kind fishermen took every means in their limited power to restore him; they placed him in one of the only two berths they possessed, for the entire crew consisted but of five men, and of these three were always on duty; they drew off his wet clothes, covered him cosily up, and gave him the only medicine they knew of—a totfull of hot stiff grog—and then he fell into a deep slumber.

When morning came, the smack was out at sea, on her homeward voyage to the coast of Angus. Cyril awoke feverish and ill. The atmosphere of the little den in which he lay was redolent of tar, stale herrings, and coarse tobacco, and every way was not conducive to a speedy recovery. His head ached fearfully; his whole frame felt as if bruised and battered; his senses wandered, and it was not until the evening of the second day that his preservers learned who he was; whence came the singular cry they had heard; how he chanced to be on that isolated rock, and that they would be well rewarded for having saved him.

The smack was light; they had sold their cargo of herrings to the French at Dunbar, and were anxious now to haul up for their own homes, somewhere about Montrose; but a head wind drove them into the North Sea, and four days elapsed before they succeeded in landing him at Lunan Bay, where he lost no time in telegraphing home, and starting by the first train for the Merse; and this was the solution of all that recent sorrow and mystery.

"Had my left foot not been freed from the stirrup in my fall, or had my horse not uttered that remarkable cry which attracted the attention of the fishermen, I had been lying now a drowned corpse in yonder sea, Mary," said Cyril, in conclusion.

Mary still sobbed, as she was terribly excited by the whole narrative; but joy made her face seem radiantly beautiful; and in a burst of confidence that was perhaps not otherwise, she told

him of Chesters' love-declaration to herself, and of his having been *en perdue* in the thicket on the night they had last met. Cyril's eyes sparkled with indignation; he knit his brows, gave his moustache a fierce twirl, and said—

"I see it all, Mary. His jealousy made me the victim of some foul revengeful trickery, which I shall yet have unravelled and punished!"

Mary omitted to speak of her detention at Chesterhaugh; for now the annoyance to which Chesters had subjected her more than ever by his address, her repugnance of him, the mortification she had occasionally felt as a high-spirited girl for the secrecy of her love affair with Cyril himself, and the plans and precautions they were compelled to observe, were all forgotten in the joyous conviction of his safety—the charm of his manner and presence.

What delight to lean again upon his arm; to feel her hand pressed caressingly to his side; to look into his face and hear his voice; and, ah! how different were his tone and bearing from those of Chesters, when with genuine interest he asked about the health of her father. Was this evening walk not all a dream, a sudden madness?

"Oh, Cyril, you do not know my papa!" she exclaimed, in answer to some remark.

"Save by sight, as mere neighbours, and not very friendly ones now; but I wish I did know him."

"He is altering fast, and looking so fearfully wizened and pale, even I, who see him hourly, can perceive that."

"Poor old man!"

At last they were close to Lonewoodlee, where the old Tower and its dense thicket stood sharply defined in purple shadow against the last flush of light that lingered in the amber tinted west.

Mary still clung to Cyril, loth to part from one so recently and so suddenly restored to her, till he whispered softly in her ear—

"You forget, Mary dearest, that I have a fond mother at Willowdean, longing to see me too."

"True. I am most selfish in detaining you so long from all at home, and I have to read or sing papa asleep; for he cannot read now, and his nights are so dull and lonely. Oh, Cyril, how I shall sing to-night!"

"Would that I were there to hear you. Good-night, my sweet Mary, until the usual hour to-morrow. Good-night."

Another moment and he was gone, and Mary lingered at the gate until his rapid footsteps died away.

"Where was all this to end?" thought Cyril, as he walked hastily homeward. He felt, as a gentleman and man of honour,

that this *secret* love for Mary Lennox was unjust to her, and might peril her good name; it was trifling with her undoubted position and with his own, and he resolved that, come what might, he must ere long declare it to his family, despite the mohurs, rupees, and thousands of cousin Gwendolyne, and the ambitious views of his father and mother, the latter especially.

Mary had as yet but one thought, as she rushed with a happy heart into her room and threw off her hat and sealskin jacket; that the first kiss after his return had been on *her* cheek, even before that of his mother.

Was this a little bit of the superstition or the selfishness which exists with all love? Perhaps so; but then she had barely a bowing acquaintance with Lady Wedderburn, and situated as she was with her son, the humiliation of that circumstance was somewhat galling to Mary's pride.

But how wild was the joy of the impulsive girl! How she sang and played that night for hours, lost in happy, happy dreams! He had been restored to her again, her lover, the hope of her future life; he who to her was "gallant and gay as the young Lochinvar;" and yet, who in reality, was only a very good specimen of a gentlemanly officer of the Line. She forgot all about the tenor and brevity of his leave of absence, and that he might be summoned away at a moment's notice; she forgot all but that he had been restored to the world and to her, and that he loved her, oh, so truly! Of all fears she was oblivious for a time, till other thoughts than joyous ones stole gradually into her mind; and then her white fingers strayed mechanically over the ivory keys of the piano, and her tremulous voice, like the last faint notes, died away.

Alas! there can be no human happiness without some alloy!

She now recalled some of Rooke Chesters' malevolent hints and speeches about the wealth and beauty of the expected cousin, and of Lady Wedderburn's evident views concerning her and Cyril; though from what precise source he drew those deductions was quite unknown, unless the ready invention of a mind inflamed by jealousy.

When this Indian heiress came, rich and lovely—for Chesters had assured Mary that she *was* lovely—would there be any change in their destiny? Oh, she must not think of that; Cyril could never change, never forget all they had been to each other.

"Alas!" thought she, "this man—this Rooke Chesters, for whom I care nothing—can come openly to see me, to talk, and even, if I permitted him, to walk with me; while Cyril—Cyril Wedderburn, who is to be my husband, whom I love so; love as Heaven alone knows—I see only by stealth! It is hard; very hard! but this is not a night on which I should repine,"

and she lifted up her hands and her soft eyes, while her heart was full of prayerful thoughts and gratitude, to Heaven.

"Forsaking may be human, but betraying is the vice of devils;" and Chesters only sought to betray, to lure, and destroy. Yet Mary knew not of that, though aware of his terrible character, for he had actually, but somewhat jocularly, spoken of marriage; and Mary shivered at the thought.

In her small turret-chamber that night—the same from the window of which she had heard the wild cry and seen the galloping horse—she shed happy tears, as she prayed beside her little couch; for the gloom that once enveloped her soul had departed, and all the bitter past seemed now a vanished dream!

CHAPTER XVII.

COUSIN GWENNY.

GREAT contentment and supreme happiness reigned at Willowdean, where long consultations were held by the gentlemen concerning Chesters, who had suddenly taken his departure to London. They had doubts of what to do, for suspicion was not proof, and Cyril had to conceal the espionage practised on himself at Lonewoodlee, and that jealousy had aught to do with the supposed treacherous trick played to his horse. Hence the whole affair seemed inexplicable to his father, his brother, and cousin, till in Cyril's mind there stole a kind of cloudy doubt even of Chesters' guilt.

"Could it be possible," he asked of himself, "that he could conceive and carry out a scheme so singularly infamous against an unsuspecting guest?"

For the next day or two, Cyril found some difficulty in keeping his appointments with Mary, for his doting mother could scarcely trust her tall, curly-pated and heavily-moustached captain of Fusileers out of her sight, she had so much to ask and to learn: and nobly were the poor skipper of Angus and the four fishermen of his smack rewarded. Cyril, however, wrote little notes to Mary, making his excuses, and expressing his love for her; and such notes were a great solace to her in her loneliness at home.

How trivial now seemed the adoption of mourning for Uncle William; the suits of black for the family and servants, the note-paper and cards with sable edges and crests, when compared with the gloom of such preparations for the loss of the heir of Willowdean!

Cyril knew that of course he was his father's heir ; and that if God and the Russian bullets spared him in the expected war, he might in time become the Baronet of Willowdean ; but with all his interest, personal and sentimental, in the old family estate, he felt bored when his father talked to him, as country gentlemen *will* talk, of the probable appearance of the crops and the face of the country, of the farm and pasture land, of top dressing, subsoil, and tile drainage, especially for the lower meadows and three great fields of the home-farm ; the weight of pigs. "By Jove," Cyril would mentally exclaim, "the weight of pigs !"

He could feel an interest when the county pack was on the *tapis*, or when he heard that the covers would require looking to ; the patent powder to feed the pheasants ; the rooting out of weasels and fowmarts ; of the new stables, and so forth ; but never in agriculture, which, in all its branches, he viewed and voted as an unqualified bore. Hunting after a night poacher, who occasionally visited the home-farm in "the glimpses of the moon," was more in Cyril's way than the alternation of green or white crops, and so forth ; but his thoughts, if not with the regiment, were ever at Lonewoodlee.

Horace Ramornie felt some interest in Sir John's topics, for though he had not an acre of land, he repined occasionally at the loss of the old patrimonial estates of his family, and felt somewhat too keenly his dependence on his uncle.

Lady Wedderburn was now intent apparently on the arrangements necessary for the reception of the expected ward ; but the chief thought of her mind was obvious to all, and she could not avoid recurring to it whenever she and Sir John were alone.

"I know that Cyril cannot quit his regiment with honour just now, when it has got letters of readiness," said she, on one occasion ; "but, dear Sir John, I should so like him to sell out, and reside quietly at home. He is not obliged to pursue his career as a soldier, like Horace, who is penniless."

"Quit !" repeated Wedderburn, testily, "I should think not. Quit on the eve of a war ! I would rather see the lad in his coffin than taunted with showing the white feather."

"In three days Gwenny will be here, and if she is so handsome as Doctor Chutnay of Madras assures us she is, she must be charming ! And if Cyril must go soon, I should wish—wish that he were married, or at least, solemnly contracted to her. You understand me, Wedderburn ?"

"Why such hasty hopes and plans, Kate ?"

"Because, as I have already hinted, some one else may marry her, and it would be an act of injustice to Cyril and ourselves to permit all her wealth to pass out of the family. Besides, our

neighbour Chesters, every way a bad style of man, may see and admire her, with views of his own."

"If he ever should meet her, which after recent events I think barely probable," said Sir John, somewhat angrily.

"Then there is the Master of Ernescleugh."

"I don't envy your task as *chaperon*," said Sir John, laughing; "you will be in dread of every young fellow in the county! But suppose that the girl may have been foolish enough to fall in love with some enterprising subaltern on the overland route home—we hear of such results every day—some fellow in whose pleasant society she has been cast by sea and land for a month or more? She may come here engaged; married, perhaps!"

The bare suggestion of such a catastrophe filled Lady Wedderburn with unutterable dismay; all the more easily, perhaps, that the same fear had occurred to herself.

The three days glided away. By the evening train Miss Gwendoleyne Wedderburn was expected to arrive from London; and Cyril, who had not seen Mary Lennox for four consecutive days, resolved to take advantage of the incidental bustle at home to ride over to Lonewoodlee for an hour after dinner; but just as Gervase Asloane was removing the cloth, and placing the decanters before Sir John, Lady Wedderburn said—

"You are aware, Cyril, that your cousin will be at the railway station in two hours from this time?"

"Yes. Does she travel alone?" asked Cyril, with provoking indifference of manner.

"Alone. No. Could you imagine that she would do so?"

"How then—with whom? Has old Chutmay come all the way from Madras with her?"

"She travels with her maid. You will, of course, go over with the carriage to meet her, as your father has complained of a twinge or two of gout."

"Can't Horace or Robert go?" asked the Captain, bluntly, as he filled his glass with golden-coloured Château d'Yquem from a white crystal bottle.

"If Sir John cannot go, *you* should and must, as his representative."

"Why must the whole house be under arms because a little Indo-Briton is coming home?"

"Cyril!" she exclaimed, lifting up her plump white hands.

"Besides, mamma, dear," said he, with something of his coaxing manner when a boy, "the fact is I have a particular engagement."

"With whom?"

The Captain coloured slightly, gave his moustache a twirl, and said—

"Oh, what does it signify? To look at a horse I wish to take back with me to the regiment."

"Not a bay hunter, I hope," said his brother Robert.

"I have had enough of bay hunters," replied Cyril, with a short laugh; and then he added, "Horace, my man, as your superior officer, I order you to go upon this tour of duty."

"With pleasure," replied Horace; but Lady Wedderburn struck in—

"If Cyril is not courteous enough to go for his cousin, let Robert appear alone. Why trouble poor Horace?"

"Why not, mamma? What trouble can it be to look after a pretty girl? Let Horace go, by all means."

"But *he* is not her cousin!"

"What does that matter, Kate? Let him go also," said Sir John, while a droll but furtive smile was exchanged by Cyril and Horace Ramornie; the carriage will surely hold three. I've known it come from a ball with six. Her maid may sit in the rumble with the servant—an arrangement which perhaps may be agreeable to them both. Asloane, order the carriage to be here punctually at seven."

Determined to have his own way, and no longer grieve Mary by his protracted absence, Cyril left the dinner table early, while Lady Wedderburn had serious misgivings about him; and punctually at the hour ordered, the handsome family carriage, with its two bright coloured bays, with plated harness; its two resplendent lamps, and a pair of spotted Dalmatian dogs in attendance, departed with Robert and Horace Ramornie for the railway station, from whence, in less than an hour, it returned with the heiress and her half-caste Indian maid, a tawny woman, whose dress, as yet, was a strange but ample scarlet garment, enveloping her whole person; and the tall footmen were immediately in requisition to carry in her bullock trunks, portmanteau, and a huge "overland," covered with black canvas and bound with iron.

More than ever provoked and piqued by the unaccountable absence of Cyril at this interesting juncture, Lady Wedderburn—though after her late terror she felt she must forgive him everything—started forward with all eagerness as the drawing-room door was thrown open by Asloane, and a wonderfully handsome, and evidently highly-bred young girl, attired in a fashionably accurate suit of deep mourning, and all in the most exquisite taste, was led in by Horace and Robert, who saw—as the latter afterwards said—his mother's "company smile" brighten into one of genuine affection and sympathy, as she embraced and kissed on both cheeks the young heiress, of whom she was now to be the custodian and *chaperon*.

"Welcome to Willowdean, my dear, dear girl," said Sir John,

taking both her hands in his, and saluting her with great tenderness. "I am your old uncle Wedderburn; yet not perhaps so *very* old, after all," he added, with a smile, while she looked wistfully and earnestly in his face, as if seeking to trace there a likeness to her dead father; but though striving hard to do so, she failed, yet thought in her heart—

"I shall always love him, because he is my papa's only brother. And, dear Aunt Wedderburn, these are my cousins?"

"One is your cousin Robert. Cyril you shall see ere long, Gwenny."

"Doctor Chutnay, of Madras, who was so kind to poor papa and me, has seen my cousin Cyril at Chatham Barracks, and says he is *so* handsome!"

"He is, indeed, Gwenny!" said Lady Wedderburn, greatly delighted by this remark; "but now, dearest girl, you must be weary with your long journey, though you would stop at York and Berwick, of course. Permit me to see you to your room, or Miss M'Caw will do so, and take off some of your things, if your maid is too weary."

And with a bow of acquiescence, and a bright pleasant smile, the young lady, who had evidently made a most favourable impression on all, retired to her own apartments; while Lady Wedderburn turned to Sir John, and said—

"A delightful girl—so charming and winning! How provoked I am by Cyril's protracted absence—about a horse, too. Who goes to buy horses at night?"

CHAPTER XVIII.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS.

FORTUNATELY for his mother's peace of mind, Cyril arrived even before his cousin descended from her rooms, where her own maid, Zillah, and Lady Wedderburn's abigail, had begun to unpack the huge overland and portmanteaus, which were filled with Indian marvels in the form of Delhi needlework and Champac jewellery of miraculous fabric; Dacca muslins, ivory fans and puzzle-balls; inlaid boxes of ivory and silver from Bombay, for essences and perfumes; and now, with memory of the sad and tender kiss of Mary Lennox lingering on his cheek—a kiss all the sadder and perhaps foreboding, as she *had* heard of the arrival of this terrible Indian heiress—he had to welcome and salute his cousin, to whom he tendered many "apologies for an absence that was so perfectly unavoidable;" and then came coffee, with a little repast for the fair traveller, who, though conscious that she was an object of undisguised

interest, and as such, undergoing inspection, never betrayed the slightest confusion ; for the mode of life in India, and the nearly total want of privacy peculiar to it, together with the number of persons, faces, places, and scenes she had met on the long route overland, rendered her perfectly self-possessed, without, however, the least over-confidence.

Gwendoleyne Wedderburn was more than a pretty girl. Though colourless—even pale—she was in fact remarkably beautiful, with a vast quantity of fine dark hair, and very dark hazel eyes, with long black lashes, which she inherited from her Welsh mother, “Gwendoleyne Ap-Rhys of Llanchillwydd,” as Lady Wedderburn frequently reminded her. Her hands and feet were beautifully formed ; she carried her head perhaps a little too haughtily ; but she was conscious of her own appearance, and had been petted and treated with extreme deference in the sunny land she had come from. Her mouth was very perfectly curved, and when in repose and not smiling—which was seldom—the upper lip resembled a little Cupid’s bow, while the under was like a tiny cherry.

She formed, Cyril thought (and he was no bad judge), a perfect picture, as she sat a little apart from all at a small tripod table, with a little hastily-prepared dinner before her, served on Dresden china. Her figure, slight and graceful, clad in a crape dress, the blackness of which contrasted so powerfully with the dazzling whiteness of her shoulders as they gleamed in the light of the gaselier which fell in a flood about her. Her dress was cut low about the neck and bust—Lady Wedderburn thought a little too low, especially when her black lace shawl fell off. A necklet of jet beads encircled her delicate and slender throat, and save it and one magnificent ring of pearls and diamonds, other ornament she had none but her beautiful hair, which was dressed to perfection.

“Heavens ! if that should be an engagement ring !” thought Lady Wedderburn, as she glanced nervously at the girl’s hand.

Her face was expressive of innocence and sweetness, just suggestive a little of pride ; and every moment she became more and more radiant as she became more familiar with those about her, and jested and chatted with her “three newly-found cousins,” as she called them. Her manner and voice were sweet, and the girl was full of pretty ways ; thus every action of her head or hands was graceful.

“Suppose all these three young fellows fall in love with her, my Lady Wedderburn will be in a nice dilemma then ! And what is more likely to happen in a country house, where people have so little to do, and are so much thrown together ?” thought Sir John Wedderburn, who was regarding her with a fond and

fatherly smile, and seeking to trace out some memory of his brother, the Willie of other days—the days of rambling, riding, and bird-nesting in Renton Woods and Willowdean—but save a phrase or two which escaped her, he found none for a time.

Lady Wedderburn claimed nearly all the good points of Gwendoleyne, as inherited from the Wedderburns; but Sir John saw that the girl was more like what her beautiful Welsh mother had been when first she came to Willowdean on her happy bridal tour, ere she went to India, the land of splendid exile; and Cyril, while he hung over her chair, while he conversed with her and looked into the bright depths of her dark and liquid eyes, was thinking how different was the lot of this wealthy and beautiful cousin as contrasted with that of the lonely girl he had lately quitted, and who at that moment was probably hanging about her father's sick bed; and he felt that his genuine and growing admiration of Gwendoleyne's beauty was a species of treason to Mary Lennox.

Will he always think so? We shall see.

Though the death of her father was a recent event comparatively, Gweny was neither sad nor sorrowful now, save when she spoke of him, and then would her voice become tremulous and her eyes suffuse with tears, for she was soft and, by nature, impressionable.

Since leaving Madras, she had been nearly six weeks on the route home, in a splendid Peninsular and Oriental liner, crowded with gay cabin passengers, officers of the Queen's and East Indian armies, Civil Service men, &c.—happy fellows, all coming home on leave or to retire altogether, as the case might be.

She had seen many marvels that were even glories to her Indian eyes, since she had watched with tears, from the lofty poop of the *Rajah*, the low, flat, sandy shore of Madras, so long her home, with the Castle of St. George and all the white minarets and gilded pagodas sinking into the blue sea, as the vessel steamed out of the roads. She had seen Aden, with its splintered rocks and arid shore of sand and ashes, where, according to Mohammedan fable, once the rose-garden of Irem bloomed; and she had seen the sun's rays shining like the Scriptural column of fire through the Gate of Tears, as she sailed past Perim into the Red Sea. Then she spoke of Suez, with its mosques and bazaars, and the exciting journey through the desert; and she clasped her pretty hands at the memory of some of the scenes she had witnessed there: its occasional horrors—camels, even men, lying dead, partly decayed or wholly skeletons, and half buried in the shifting sand, with the black vultures hovering over or perching on them, and for a background to the whole, the Pyramids rising in the distance, like purple cones against a sky of fire and amber. And then there

was the awful thirst endured there—a thirst that rendered bitter beer, potass, and sherry, veritable nectar, however homely they may be deemed elsewhere.

Then came the Mediterranean, where she had encountered one of those sudden storms peculiar to that sea, when its waves changed from dark blue to pale green, and from thence to purple and silver, while the rain descended as if the windows of Heaven had been opened again. But old Gibraltar, its rock and town, its terraces and batteries, had filled her with delight, and so did everything else.

By that time, most of her *compagnons du voyage* were married ladies, old officers, or invalids—a statement which soothed some of Lady Wedderburn's fears—and so, chatting merrily, she told of all she had seen; and, in the energy of her manner, and full of her narrative, which, somehow, she addressed chiefly to Horace Ramornie—but then he too had recently come home by the P. and O. route—when she laid, quite involuntarily, her soft ungloved hand, with its white modelled fingers, on his arm, the young man felt a thrill run through him, though he was not “a cousin”—a circumstance on which their mutual Aunt Wedderburn placed so much weight.

Did this new friend, this lovely girl, possess some magnetic power, or what was it? for Horace felt himself grow giddy with delight whenever she touched him.

She heard Cyril's thrilling story of his late terrible adventure, which was so keenly fresh in his mind and in the minds of all the household, but while she listened, it seemed to Lady Wedderburn, who was nervously observant, that her eyes, “whose lids seemed to be fringed with feathers from a bird's wing rather than with ordinary lashes, so thick and soft lay their shadows on her cheek,” from time to time sought, not those of Cyril, but of Horace Ramornie.

Gweny was soon found to be generous to a fault, and, by the suitable presents she lavished on all sides, she made friends with all. Her poor papa's magnificent hookah, with its snaky coil of silk and gold, and its pure amber mouthpiece, she had brought carefully home, with many other mementos, for her uncle Wedderburn. To Lady Wedderburn she gave a beautiful diamond ring, and made poor little Miss Flora M'Caw radiantly happy by a set of gold Champac ornaments, necklace, rings, and bracelets, that the Begum Sumroo, or even the terrible Queen of Delhi, might have worn with credit.

Three days saw her perfectly domesticated and at home in her new abode; but many things there excited her surprise.

“How few servants you have, dear Auntie!” said she one day, “only the Kitmutgar Asloane—such a droll name he has!—a few bheesties, syces, and ayahs, a butler, coachman, two,

valets, and a few women. How on earth do you contrive to do with so few? We had nearly fifty at our house in the Choultry, besides six punkawallahs."

"Fifty! where did you find beds for them all, Gwenny?"

"Oh, they slept on mats, everywhere or anywhere—on the stairs, in the corridors, on the roof, or in the verandahs, when the rainy season was over."

"Such arrangements would scarcely suit Willowdean," said her aunt, laughing.

The fireplaces, the carpeted floors, the total absence of a great dark punkah swaying noiselessly overhead, all filled her with a wonder that was almost childish. Horace and Cyril could both speak with her of India, having served there; the former two years, and the latter five. Poor Bob knew nothing about it, so, as he was rather ignored, he fumed a little in secret, and thought to himself, "when those fellows' leave of absence is up, I shall have it all my own way—patience till then."

All the ideas of the young heiress were odd for a time, being of course those of an Indo-Briton. The Indian summer had just ended when she left Madras, and the Scottish spring had just begun when she arrived at Willowdean, hence the verdure was not so great as she might have found it in Devonshire. The fruit and flowers in the conservatory seemed all strange, puerile, and meagre to her eyes. Luxury and splendour there appeared but little. There was no state kept, she thought, at Willowdean; no horde of half-nude native servants, obsequious to slavery; no camels, with gorgeous housings; no elephants, bearing gilded howdahs with silken curtains; no dhoolie or palauquin bearers, singing gaily as they trotted along. She woke at unearthly hours in the morning, to the astonishment and annoyance of the butler and housemaids, and wished to have a drive, as if she were still at the Choultry of Madras; and then, the perpetual clouds, and more than all the occasional mist from the German Sea—white, dense, and palpable—filled her with wonder, accustomed as she had been to the pure and deep blue sky of Hindostan.

She smiled, and even laughed with provoking playfulness, when Lady Wedderburn, who was fond of "talking peerage," expatiated on the historical and somewhat shady traditional glories of the Welsh race of Ap-Rhys of Llanichillwydd; on the famous Dafydd-ap-Gwilym-ap-Rhys, who inherited all the virtues of Howel Dha, whose daughter had been his great-grandmother, and gave him the blood of the Pendragons. All this sounded odd to Gwenny—very odd—for her papa had been a man of the world, a thorough man of business, who stuck to his ledgers and counting-house, always looking forward, setting little store upon the past, and nothing at all upon a dead ancestry.

Gervase Asloane, the old housekeeper, and other domestics, she somewhat shocked by using the piano on Sunday, and by yawning, more than a young lady should, in church—the parochial barn—oh, good heavens ! how unlike it was to the lofty, airy, and white chunam-coated cathedral of the Bishop of Madras ! Then there was no organ, and to her ears, the psalm-singing sounded but as a torrent of dissonant strains.

Her conversation for a time naturally enough ran on memories of the brilliant land she had left—the Choultry of Madras, with all its stately palaces, the black and the white towns, and the catamarans tossing amid the white and foaming surge, which there boils for ever on the shore ; of chowries and mosquito curtains ; of punkawallahs and tattywetters ; of bheesties and peons, and other persons and things incomprehensible to Lady Wedderburn, who, however, was greatly delighted that Cyril could talk with her on such mysterious matters, and understood what she meant. But then, unluckily, Horace Ramornie knew all about them too, and had been in garrison at Vellore ; still Bob sulked, and when Sir John laughed, voted it all “a dreadful bore.”

She was astonished to find that people slept in their beds, and not merely *on* them ; that blankets and broadcloth were used even in summer ; that the butter was neither poured out like cream nor thickened with dead flies. The state of the thermometer was a source of perpetual wonder to her, and she said to Horace—

“Is it as cool always at Willowdean as on the Blue Mountains of Madras in the wet season ?”

But greater surprises were in store for her, when winter came with its frost and snow, its skaters and curlers on loch and river.

With all her kindness and goodness of heart, Lady Wedderburn, in pursuit of her secret wish, was singularly injudicious.

Gweny had come among her relations, an orphan. Horace Ramornie, though now a soldier, a young lieutenant of the Line, could remember the time when he, too, came to Willowdean in the days of his early orphanage, and the lonely hours when he lay in his little bed at night, seeing, in fancy, his parents' faces amid the darkness, and longing, with all a childish longing and yearning, “for a touch of the vanished hand, and the sound of a voice that was still ;” and these recollections made him very tender in his manner to Gweny, though Horace had ever a gentle and a winning way with all women, old as well as young.

“Cousin Horace,” said she, on one occasion, “and you have been an orphan like myself ; how strange !”

“Horace is *not* your cousin, but Cyril is,” said Lady Wedderburn, in a pointed manner, as she passed through the drawing-room into the conservatory.

Her words conveyed a volume, for Gwenny blushed scarlet, and the young man grew pale.

"I am not your cousin, Miss Wedderburn—would that I were," said he, with a low sigh.

"Why, what difference would it make?"

"For then I might—might claim something more than mere friendship."

"Not my cousin?" queried Gwenny, her dark eyes dilating as she spoke. "Oh, I know that you are not, though Lady Wedderburn is aunt to us both; but why call me *Miss*—say Gwenny, as Cyril and Robert do."

"Gwenny then," said Horace, tremulously and softly, for the girl's wonderful beauty bewildered, while her frank and candid manner charmed and entranced him; but he felt a secret consciousness that, before Lady Wedderburn, to call Gwenny by her abbreviated name would be rather injudicious.

While shrinking from the idea of rivalling his cousin Cyril, and earning thereby the anger of such benefactors as his uncle and aunt, Horace Ramornie was in love with all the deep strength of a young man's first and genuine passion. The girl, as we have said, was undoubtedly beautiful, and if love will *glorify* all it looks on, to his eyes the face and presence of Gwendoleyne became as something divine, and Horace was intoxicated by her!

Night after night he lay awake for hours, feeding his soul with the idea of Gwendoleyne; longing for and yet nervously dreading his recall to the regiment, amid this strange and fresh emotion that had grown in his heart, and which was alike his torment and delight.

He would sigh deeply and bitterly, clasping his hands in the dark, as he thought of his cousin Cyril's greater chances of success, his superior position, his attainments, and many genuine good qualities; and also of his aunt's too perceptible opposition; and then he would wring them like a love-sick girl, for Horace was by nature shy, impressionable, and enthusiastic.

Another was wringing her hands at times in Lonewoodlee, and weeping the silent tears of sad and bitter misgiving!

CHAPTER XIX.

SCHEMES.

LADY ERNESCLEUGH, a large, showy, and fashionable-looking woman, had driven to Willowdean with her son Everard, the Master of Ernescleugh, who was a lieutenant in the Household Brigade, on hearing of the new arrival; and though the future

lord was so wealthy that money was no particular object to him, the beauty of Gwenny, and the piquancy that was in all she did and said, impressed him favourably; and now a series of dinners, picnics, drives to various places of interest, and even a pleasure excursion in his yacht, were schemed out; but, to some of the former, and more especially the latter, Lady Wedderburn was decidedly opposed; and the too recent death of Sir John's only brother afforded her a good pretext for doing so, and keeping Gwenny at home, while Cyril's leave of absence lasted, at least.

Lady Ernesclough urged her to take Gwenny to London, and have her presented at the very first drawing room next season; adding, that if Lady Wedderburn cared not about going to town, she would herself be only too happy to act as *chaperon* to a girl so beautiful and so certain to make a sensation; but the watchful mother had no desire that the wealthy heiress should be lost to her Cyril in the splendid whirlpool of London society, while he, perhaps, was fighting the Russians. Heaven alone knew where, for as yet the scene of the expected war was vague indeed.

Her whole aim was to "bring the young people together," and in this instance it was overdone. Cyril saw through her scheme, though Gwenny did not; and he was both amused and bored by it, for the master-thought evinced itself in many trifling ways.

"Gwenny, my darling," said she, one evening, in the drawing-room, "I am sure your cousin longs to hear you sing and play. Don't you, Cyril?"

"Of course," replied Cyril, who had been furtively looking at the French clock on the white marble mantelpiece, and thinking it was almost time he was drawing near the stile at Lonewoodlee. "Of course, if she will so far favour us," he added, hastening to open the piano, set up the music-frame, and adjust the stool; devoutly hoping the while that the performance would be as short as possible.

"I play little, and sing less now," said Gwenny.

"Gwendolayne!" exclaimed Lady Wedderburn, as she shook her lace lappets and diamond pendants.

"Besides, dearest Aunt, Horace Ramornie is a critic, and I dislike to play before critics."

"You played and sang to *him* yesterday," said Robert Wedderburn, before Horace, who was about to deprecate being deemed a critic, could speak.

"True; but he pressed me so," said Gwenny, with the faintest blush.

"Come, Horace, and press her again," urged Cyril, with a nonchalant laugh.

"Will you, then, favour me—us, I mean," whispered Horace, leading her to the piano, while his cheek reddened.

She seated herself at the instrument, spreading all her crape flounces over the stool, and began at once the prelude to some little air she had picked up abroad. Her voice was sweet and tender; but neither the words of the song nor her execution were brilliant; and Cyril, while he listened, admiring the while her ivory neck and pretty hands, was thinking of another whose fine voice, a glorious soprano, could thrill his heart to the core.

Lady Wedderburn often found her eldest son and his cousin in the conservatory—in the library, and even in the billiard-room; and always left them discreetly, little thinking that Gwenny was in the first instance merely expatiating on the superior flora of Madras and the Carnatic; in the second, perhaps selecting a book or so by Cyril's suggestion; and in the third, that he, so far from talking of love when looking into the soft dark eyes of Gwendoleyne, was discussing most learnedly, cue in hand, on the screw and side-twist; of losing and winning hazards; of what a famous stroke Probyn of ours was; of winning no end of scores off the red ball running; of pool and pyramid; all of which were as Sanscrit and Oordoo to the fair listener.

Busy with his steward or ground bailie, riding about one day or rambling the next, with weeder in hand, his sturdy legs cased in brown leather gaiters, and his wide-awake garnished with hooks and flies, Sir John spent most of his time out of doors, looking after his estate, seeing where trees were to be cut down or others planted, water-courses to be changed, or little bridges to be built; and only once did he speak to Cyril of Gwenny, and even then at Lady Wedderburn's suggestion.

"If you mean to propose for your cousin, Cyril, you have my free consent. Do so, and do it at once. You know our maxim in hunting——"

"Never crane if you mean to take a leap?"

"Exactly. And now I am off to see how the tile-draining gets on."

"Is she not handsome, Cyril?" said Lady Wedderburn on one occasion, passing her arm through that of her son, as he stood, abstractedly, looking from the library window on the gravelled terrace, where Gwenny and Horace were feeding the peacocks with crumbs of biscuits.

"Of course she is handsome," replied Cyril, twirling his moustache; "but——" and he paused.

"But what?"

"One sees so many handsome girls in every garrison town. At such places as Canterbury they are thick as blackberries."

"But few garrison hacks have three hundred thousand pounds."

"Few indeed," replied her gay captain, laughing. "And as for loving them, fellows only go in for that, mother dear, till the *route* comes. It is a very limited liability after all ; and then we leave them little pink notes—perhaps a lock of hair ; or simply send our servants with our august bits of pasteboard, scribbled P. P. C., for Dublin or Delhi, Brighton or Beloochistan, as the case may be ; the mess-plate is packed, the colours are cased, and away we go with the band playing, 'Good-bye, sweetheart, good-bye.'"

"Cyril, you will drive Gwenny to Coldingham to-morrow, and show her the ruins of the Priory."

"I don't think that a girl who has seen the vast rock-hewn temples of the Buddhists and the Pyramids of Egypt will care much about our old Priory. Besides she is to be driven there by Horace. *He* knows all about these old places more than I do ; and can tell her the whole story of how Edgar, King of Scotland, built it in the eleventh century, and gave it to the monks of Durham, and all that sort of thing."

"Horace ! It is always Horace," said his mother, with undisguised annoyance.

"Besides, I am engaged."

"How—where, and with whom ?" she asked, while the gloom deepened on her fair and open brow.

"Three questions, mother dear. You worry me ! How am I engaged ? By a previous arrangement. Where ? At Ernescleugh to dinner. With whom ? The Master. And now you have it all," said he, kissing her, as he used to do in boyhood.

Still she was dissatisfied, and taking his hand in hers, led him into her beautiful little boudoir—that toy chamber, with the blue satin and silver hangings, where she kept all Cyril's Indian presents to herself.

"Come," said she, as she closed the door, "I must speak with you seriously on the subject that is nearest my heart."

CHAPTER XX.

MY LADY EXPOSTULATES.

CYRIL's love for Mary Lennox was great ; all the greater that his heart was an honest one, and that so much of compassion was blended with his love. He knew that when he left her for the East she would be alone—most terribly alone—if her father died ; for with his life her means would pass away. So Cyril had been thinking seriously of a secret marriage, and thus

making for her such a provision or position as would compel his family to support her honourably, if he fell in action, or died of those diseases which follow an army into the field.

But he felt, on consideration, that proposing or effecting such a measure would perhaps be an act of injustice both to Mary and his family, placing her, perhaps, in a false position with them in particular and the world in general.

Too well he knew that to announce openly his engagement, or a resolution, to marry the poor and penniless Mary Lennox, the daughter of a bankrupt and spendthrift, would excite the greatest opposition—perhaps a quarrel with his father and mother, whom he justly loved and respected.

On the strength of his opposition, Sir John might take very high ground and cut off his allowance; without it could he rejoin the regiment? and if he failed to do so, on the eve of a war, where would his honour be as a soldier and a man? He felt sure that even his brother Robert would open his eyes very wide with wonder at such a matrimonial scheme; for he had studied law long enough to have imbibed something of the caution peculiar to the legal tribe.

Cyril's monetary difficulties were not trivial. He had come on leave from an expensive regiment to retrench a little, and within a few days he had lost the bay hunter, just after paying Ernescleugh for him; and with what he had lost at cards with Chesters, this made over a thousand pounds. Then he had some gambling and other debts at headquarters; but no I O U's were permitted to circulate in the Royal Fusileers, by a mess regulation of that corps, where the word of a brother officer was always deemed sufficient.

He felt worried on every hand, and once or twice his evil angel whispered that, were Mary Lennox less winning, less sweet, and more than all, less helpless, he might listen to his mother's suggestions; but no sooner was the evil idea insinuated, than the honest fellow crushed it in his heart. He could never be false to his tender, true, and secret love!

With his mind thus agitated by conflicting thoughts, it may be imagined with what patience he listened to his mother, who still retained his hand confidingly and caressingly in hers, as she seated herself by his side on a blue satin *fauteuil*, and begun thus sententiously—

"The whole of this beautiful estate of Willowdean, when it comes to you, as in the course of events it will, burdened as it is by sundry old debts, and the allowances to your brother and Horace Ramornie, will not yield——"

"And to you, mother dear."

"Don't talk of me; I have no wish to survive my dear husband. Will not yield, I was about to say, enough for one

of your expensive tastes and habits ; therefore, a wealthy marriage is necessary."

"You flatter me ; but I love to be independent."

"And like many independent men, may end by making a fool of yourself," she added, with more bluntness of manner than was usual with her. "Pardon me, Cyril, but perhaps you have done so already."

"How ?"

"By forming some unsuitable, if not unworthy, attachment."

Cyril's handsome face flushed and grew pale under her scrutiny.

"Mother dear," said he, gently, "you never spoke to me in this strange tone before. Oh, why adopt it now ? I know what you mean and wish ; but do not ask me now, at least."

"Then if you will not be so attentive to your cousin as I wish, promise me one thing, Cyril."

"Twenty, if you choose, mother."

"That you form no hasty attachment elsewhere, and enter into no engagement without consulting me?"

Again he coloured perceptibly, for he felt that the keen eyes of his mother were watching him, while the earnest grasp of her soft white hand tightened upon his ; but he replied, evasively, and with a laugh—

"I shall engage the Russians only. There, will that suffice you ? I beg your pardon, dearest mother," he urged, "but do let us cease this most unpleasant subject : and now I'll have a quiet weed in the conservatory."

But Lady Wedderburn was not yet done with him, and said, with growing excitement—

"Am I to conclude that you are a bad, or unnatural son, Cyril, who would repay my love and anxiety with banter ?"

"Because I won't propose to a woman—a girl I don't care for, and who does not care for me ? By Jove ! it is too absurd."

"Your interjections are not choice. If Gwendoleyne is beautiful in her eighteenth year, what will she be some time hence, in the full development of womanhood ?"

"Adorably lovely, I know ; yet I am in no mood to marry."

"No mood to marry *her*, perhaps," said Lady Wedderburn, with a sudden flash in her eyes. "Think of her wealth."

"I am ashamed to say that I have thought of it," said Cyril, with a sigh ; "all the more that I am pretty close run for money, both here and at headquarters ; but for Heaven's sake, don't let us have a row about Gwenny."

"A 'row' ! How can you talk in this slangy mode to me ? How dare you, Cyril ?" she added, rising. "I thought that you rather boasted of your good taste over such men as Chesters of Chesterhaugh."

"'Pon my soul, you go beyond old Colonel Bahawder, of the dépôt battalion! But, my lady mother," said he, kissing her hand with playful respect, and caressing the braids of her black hair, which was now becoming seamed with white, "like some of the well-fed perch in yonder pond, I am content to coquette with the sweets and crumbs that come my way, even as Gwenny is now throwing them in; but as for matrimony, that I leave to a sober-sided fellow like Robert, or a melancholy-eyed Romeo like Horace: and now that I think of it, she changes colour so visibly when Horace speaks to her, that I begin to suspect——"

"That he is in love with her?"

"No."

"What then?"

"By Jove! that she is in love with *him*," replied Cyril, quietly selecting a cigar from a handsome case (embroidered for him by some confiding garrison beauty), and preparing it for smoking by carefully biting off the end, and heedless that his mother's eyes were sparkling with resentment.

"Are you aware that what I urge is also your father's wish?" she asked.

"Likely enough," replied Cyril, with growing annoyance. "There are Baronets as well as Knights of the Golden Calf, and both are more numerous than the Knights of the Golden Fleece."

"Go on, sir, go on; though I never before heard you sneer at your good papa."

"How you pervert my words! I do not sneer; but in all this matter has poor Gwenny no right to be consulted?"

"Not much; she is so young, she is our ward, whom we are to see properly bestowed in marriage; and where could she be given more properly than to one whom we have known from his boyhood?"

"And a little earlier," said Cyril, laughing outright.

"You may—nay, you *must* win her, if you will only try, Cyril."

"But I don't want her. By Jove! think of a fellow going in for matrimony and the corps having got its letters of readiness. I might be telegraphed away from the very altar—have to make a halt of it, a half-married man. There would be a little melodrama for you! The whole thing is absurd, mother."

"Well, when you return?"

"Who can count on returning? There are such things as shot and shell, shipwreck, camp-fever, frost and starvation, and so forth," was the gloomy response. "I may be taken prisoner by the Russians, and never heard of again."

"Do not talk so, Cyril, I implore you. Marry Gwenny and get on the staff. If you will still soldier, let it be at home."

"If I do may I be—cashiered, that is all!"

Usually, Lady Wedderburn's manner had all the perfect serenity and unruffled calmness peculiar to good and gentle breeding, but now her brow, wont to be so smooth, became clouded over; wrinkles actually appeared where none had been visible before; her fine mouth became compressed, and an expression, almost of baleful spite, stole into her clear, dark grey eyes, as she drew herself up to her full height, and said, with half-averted face—

"I know to whom I am indebted for this steady opposition to my wishes."

"To whom, mother?"

"That artful girl at Lonewoodlee. Ah! servants will talk, and local gossips too!" and with a scornful sweep of her skirts, she glided from the boudoir, even as she did so repenting that she should leave in wrath the Absalom she had so nearly lost by a terrible fate!

"So, so, it's out at last! Local gossips have been busy with Mary's name—curse them!" muttered Cyril. "Mamma has opened the trenches with a vengeance! Well, I am not a boy, though she seems disposed to treat me as such. What is to be done now? See my poor Mary about it, at all hazards."

As he glanced round his mother's luxurious boudoir, with its blue satin and silver hangings, its Aubusson carpet of pale green, studded with beautiful bouquets, its marble busts and alabaster vases, and tiny tables glittering with a crowd of handsome and elegant trifles, and thought of Mary's gloomy home, his heart felt sick and sore; he sighed deeply, and entering the lofty and stately conservatory, lit his cigar, and threw himself on a sofa, to think over his plans for the future.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE TRYST.

At the close of a recent chapter, it is mentioned that Mary Lennox had been shedding silent tears, and had not been without secret misgivings or forebodings of coming sorrow.

Situated as she was with regard to Cyril, it was scarcely possible that she should feel otherwise than restless when the absence of her lover, and the circumstance of his having unavoidably broken some appointments with her, were coupled with the hints of Chesters, and the stories told her by her two gossiping old domestics, of the wealth and undoubted beauty of the new resident at Willowdean.

Without absolutely cutting her—for that was a solecism in good breeding of which she would be loth to be guilty—Lady Wedderburn had too plainly held aloof from Mary Lennox in

the few public places where they met ; and Mary had tolerated much of that "tabooing," but with a bursting heart, for she could not forget that the haughty offender was the mother of Cyril ; though how little could that scheming matron then know what Cyril was to Mary—what they were to each other !

Though Mary mourned in her loneliness when he was absent with his regiment, and moving then, as she knew, in a gay and fashionable circle, his letters were a constant solace to her ; and now that he was at home, though she trusted him—or strove to do so—to see him riding, driving, talking, and laughing with his cousin and other ladies, while he could only accord her a furtive smile or a polite bow, fretted, galled, and humiliated her ; for she could not forget much of her father's teaching, or that she was a lady whose forefathers had a name among the Scottish Border Barons long before the Wedderburns had an acre of land in the Merse.

She began to recall, perhaps too much, the artful insinuations of Chesters, and to brood over them till they sank deep into her heart. She began also to repine and fear a little when she heard of all those things—of such gaieties at Willowdean as the season of conventional mourning permitted ; and when she knew that he was constantly thrown in the society of this perilous beauty—when he was away for days with her and other ladies at race meetings and other places ; and now, through Doctor Squills and the Minister's wife, almost her only other visitors, came a rumour that he and she were to have quite a little cruise in the Master of Earnescleugh's yacht, to the Isle of May, to Coquetmouth, to Lindisfarne Abbey, and other places. So when she thought of all the advantages of propinquity, and remembered all she had heard and read of the pleasant intercourse that cousinship permitted, and how much more a recently known cousin might be likely to impress him than one long known from infancy like a sister, her poor little heart trembled within her !

One day, however, she was made happy by Lady Wedderburn bowing to her pleasantly, and even stopping the carriage to ask for Mr. Lennox, but that was in the fulness of her heart after the restoration of her son.

"So your mamma is coming round to me by degrees, at least, Cyril," said Mary, with a hopeful smile.

But Cyril knew too well what his mother's secret aspirations were, and answered only with a sigh.

Three days after this, gossips had been at work, and when Lady Wedderburn saw her in the little street of Willowdean she looked straight at the ears of her horses as the handsome carriage bowled away on the Earnescleugh road, without according a glance of recognition to Mary, who felt crushed and hurt

keenly, all the more so that she saw the dark eyes of Gwendolayne remarking her with an expression of interest; and Mary could judge for herself how great was the girl's beauty.

Mary knew that it was tradition in her family that two ladies of it, both sisters, had died as nuns among the Cistercians at Lennel, and somehow, now she often thought of those two women, their reasons for becoming recluses, and wondered if they had found within their cells the peace she feared she would not find in the world. Then she smiled a bitter smile, as she thought that nothing lasted for ever; that all things passed away; that even Lennel was a shattered ruin, and its cemetery, where the sisters lay, had been swept away by the Tweed into the sea.

All unaware of the gloomy misgivings of her he loved, in the evening after the long and unpleasant conversation with his mother, Cyril, after riding from one of the gates of Willowdean as if going towards Greenlaw, the county town, turned off abruptly by a narrow byeway, and took that for Lonewoodlee, for he was to meet Mary at the stile, which quite as often as the coppice formed their place of tryst,

He was full of perplexing thoughts, and permitting the reins to drop on his horse's neck, let the animal proceed at a slow walk along the path which led only towards the residence of Mr. Lennox.

He felt that some explanation, some more open and more decided arrangement, were imperatively due to a girl of Mary's position and character; but, as already stated, he dreaded the opposition of his whole family; he dreaded the debts he had contracted in his folly, and to marry on his pay—if his father in his indignation reduced him to that—a pittance which barely paid for his messing, glazed boots and cigars—would be the act of a madman, even if Mary would consent to it; but then he knew that Mary, even were she as rich as his cousin Gwendolayne, would not do so at present, as she was chained by filial love and duty to her father's sick-bed.

Well, that necessity freed him from one item of responsibility in the awkward position of their affairs.

Cyril drew from his portemonnaie a ring; it was a plain hoop, and so like a wedding one that it might have passed as such, but for a single diamond of great value that was set therein, and this altered its character. It was a tiny ring too, and he trusted it would fit the dear finger for which he intended it. With a fond smile he replaced it in his purse, and dismounting at the stile, threw the bridle of his horse over his arm, and looked around him.

The stile was old and well worn by the footsteps of many a wayfarer. It was simply formed by three great stones project-

ing from an ancient wall, and stood in a sequestered place, secret and lonesome, where the pink and white hawthorn usually bloomed and scented the air ere the end of May ; where the pendant cups of the bright foxglove and the blue-bell mingled with the brown autumn fern, among which the hare and rabbit lurked, and where hardy little thistles grew in every cleft, while over all towered the triple arms of a gigantic thorn of vast age, whereon many a Scottish outlaw and English moss-trooper had been hung "in his boots," as the phrase went, in the foraying times of old ; for the whole Borderland is full of such dark memories.

Around the pastoral hills stood up grim and silent against the red sunset sky. As Cyril looked on all these objects, so long familiar to his eyes, he pondered on what other scenery they might be resting ere long, and where that day month might find him ; too probably far away at sea, on board a transport crowded with troops, longing to be ashore and in front of the enemy.

And Mary too had often surveyed their meeting-place with wistful eyes and boding heart, thinking how lonely it would be when he should come no more, and how terribly desolate it seemed when he was supposed to be lost to her and all the world ; and how often had she shuddered at the story of the midnight race, the plunge, and the narrow escape—the rescue of her Cyril from a terrible death !

His mother's taunt was yet tingling in his ears ; and now, lest watchful eyes might be upon them, he almost dreaded to meet Mary at the accustomed stile or in the coppice ; for had not Chesters basely condescended to spy upon their meeting there ?

"Ah !" thought Cyril, "had I but known of such a circumstance on that terrible night, instead of sharing his sham hospitality, my hunting-whip and Rooke Chesters' shoulders had made an intimate and not to be forgotten acquaintance."

Cyril had but a minute or two to wait, when the slight figure of Mary, so lithe, graceful, and so compact, from her little round hat and feather to her brass-heeled Balmorals, came tripping down the pathway between two fields, and ascended the stile, from whence his ready hand now helped her down.

"Cyril, dearest Cyril, I have kept you waiting," said she, looking upward with a strange and earnest expression in her violet-blue eyes. Secure as she had been of his love, and familiar with it, there had always been a charming shyness in Mary's manner when with Cyril ; now it was sad and gloomy, though visibly she sought to conceal it, affecting to smile, and with her tightly-gloved hand to twirl, nervously, her parasol upon her shoulder.

"And what of your papa to-day ?" he asked.

"Kind Cyril, you always ask for him, my only and unfailing friend; papa is sleeping: he always takes an after-dinner nap; but when I watch him thus there always comes over me a horrible, an awful thought, Cyril!"

"What—which?"

"If he were dead—DEAD—my dear papa, instead of only sleeping, what should I do then?"

"Rely on me, darling," he whispered, and drew her close to him, and now he observed that Mary had her veil tied tightly over her face, to conceal her tears, perhaps.

"I can't kiss you through *that* thing, dearest," he urged, while endeavouring to remove it.

"Better not kiss me at all. Oh, would that you had never done so, Cyril!"

His fine dark blue eyes possessed usually a wonderful, a magnetic power of fascination in them; but on this occasion they failed to reassure Mary, who, despite all her efforts at self-control, began to weep, and Cyril, with his natural abhorrence of a scene, felt more of worry than wonder.

"What is the matter? Speak, darling Mary," he urged, tenderly; for he could see that she looked wan, and a dark tinge that lay under each of her eyes, was visible through the purity of her skin.

"Oh, forgive me, Cyril, forgive me!"

"For what?" he asked, with growing wonder.

"For having doubted your affection; but doubts did begin to steal into my head. I began to fear there was a change somewhere, and I have been praying humbly to God that you might not love me less now than before."

"Love you less! I do not comprehend!"

"Yes, yes," sobbed Mary, nestling her sad little face on the breast of his black velvet shooting coat; "for Chesters hinted to me——"

"What dared he to hint?" exclaimed Cyril, striking his spurred heel into the gravel.

"Oh, pardon me, Cyril. I know not what I am saying. I have slept so little for two or three nights past. I never do sleep when I have not seen you, and Cyril, you seem always so gay and happy with her—I mean—those people with whom I see you at times."

"Gay, Mary? Yes. I have to smile, like the Spartan boy, who had the fox under his mantle—the fox whose teeth devoured his vitals," replied Cyril, making rather a far-fetched simile. "One is not always happy when smiling. I think ever of you, when absent, of our coming separation, and the difficulties of our mutual position."

There was a pause, during which he looked tenderly and

lovingly into the violet eyes of Mary, and thought how dove-like, sad, and sweet, they were in expression.

Then he began to perceive her ruling thought by her leading question.

"Your new cousin seems to be a most attractive girl. Is she not so?"

"Very. Her eyes are gloriously beautiful, Mary."

"Oh, indeed," said Mary, while her nether lip quivered, her eyes drooped, and a pallor almost ghastly stole over her soft face.

"Yes, just like yours, except that the lids are not so finely formed, nor the lashes, though thick, so long."

"Am I to compare with her?" she asked, a little assured.

"Yes," said Cyril, smiling back at the wistful smile.

"Indeed!"

"Yes; but you would gain immensely by the comparison. But come, my dearest, there must be no pouting, no doubt of me, no jealousy of poor Gwenny. You know how dearly I love, and have ever loved you—ay, almost since you were a mere girl, when I came home from India, and brought your dead brother's sword and rings to Lonewoodlee; but listen to me now, I have much to say, and may not have so good an opportunity again."

His left arm was round her waist; their right hands were clasped together, and as Mary's head drooped on his shoulder, her words became sighs or only half-articulated tenderness. She looked helpless and beautiful, soft and ladylike; and once more, in the tumult of his heart, Cyril, with broken accents, urged a private marriage, for her further security, in case the worst should happen to him; but Mary was firm, and with tears and paleness—not blushes—spoke of her father's health, and how she would not and could not, with honour to herself, marry even Cyril (whom she loved as her own soul) in a fashion such as he proposed, as it would insure the contempt of his family and the doubt of society; and this she reiterated again, firmly, sadly, earnestly, and with her eyes full of tears, till Cyril became convinced that the idea was impolitic, unwise, and not calculated to conduce to their future happiness.

He drew the glove from her left hand, and while placing the diamond ring upon her wedding finger—a slender little finger it was—he drew her still closer to his breast.

"Mary," he whispered, "my darling Mary, you are the secret wife of my heart. Never let this betrothal ring—the ring that binds you to me—leave your finger until I replace it by one that shall be consecrated!" and he kissed her on the eyes, and then the hand that bore the symbol which was indicative of affection long before the days of Juvenal.

"As your wife, Cyril, I shall ever deem myself; as your widow, should we never meet again!" said Mary, in a soft, low, agitated voice.

And with something of a prayer in his heart, Cyril lifted his hat, as he kissed her once more. After this they became more composed, even more happy, perhaps, for their hearts became filled with a divine trust in themselves and in the future.

"Yet what shall I do when you are far away from me, Cyril?" asked Mary. "Men love so differently from women. They have their avocations, occupations—their friends and amusements. The lonely woman can but brood and weep in silence: her heart thrust back upon herself as it were, for lack of the thousand little tendernesses and kindnesses that the man she loves can alone bestow."

"True, Mary; but do not repine thus, darling."

The twilight had deepened into the gloaming now, and even that was darkening fast; so leading his horse by the bridle, Cyril walked along the lonely hill-side path with Mary towards her home, and at last, with happy hearts, they parted at the end of the ancient thicket.

"Shall I see you to-morrow, Cyril?" she asked, as he mounted.

"It is impossible, Mary. I am engaged to dine at Ernescleugh, and that place lies in quite an opposite direction from this. Adieu, till next evening. Adieu, with a thousand kisses to you."

And he galloped away.

Mary's heart misgave her; he was to dine at Ernescleugh, with Everard Home. She had, with a reticence that was unwise and unlike her, shrank nervously from speaking to Cyril of her enforced detention at Chesterhaugh; but now she trembled lest the young Master of Ernescleugh had recognised her in the waggonette, and might speak of the strange circumstance of her being there with Chesters, and at such an hour.

The demon of doubt had been removed from her heart; but fear now took his place, and a time came when Mary repented bitterly of the reticence in question.

She was alternately happy and fearful—longing intently for her next meeting with Cyril, and resolved to tell him openly of the only secret that haunted her; and she was never weary of kissing and looking at the ring, the solemn link which bound her fate to that of Cyril Wedderburn.

And now, when she thought of the place where it had been placed upon her finger—the old triple thorn tree—there came back to memory a quaint legend connected with her family. It was a little ominous, so far as regarded the ring, and yet Mary laughed.

For local tradition avers that, in the days when Mary of

Lorraine was Regent of Scotland, Malcolm Lennox, younger brother of Oliver, who built the present Tower of Lonewoodlee, was a famous Border warrior, who caused an infinite deal of trouble and anxiety to the Governor of Berwick, the Captain of Norham, and other Wardens along the English Border. Like his compatriot, Sir William of Deloraine—

“A stark moss-trooping Scot was he
As ere couched Border lance by knee.
Blindfold he knew the paths to cross,
By Solway sands and Tarra Moss.
By wily turns and desperate bounds,
He baffled Percy's best bloodhounds.”

But one night he had got more wine than usual, when supping with the Laird of Thirlstane, and lost his way in Dogden Moss, where he must have perished, had not a beautiful young woman, who suddenly appeared, become his guide to firm land, and before daybreak he had betrothed himself to her, and placed on a finger of her left hand a golden ring.

Some nights after this, he was assailed by a multitude of wild cats, who seemed to have been holding a species of “sabbatt,” or Walpurgis festival, at the triple thorn tree, and had to defend himself with a sword. In the course of this strange *mêlée* he hewed the foreleg from one which had made itself particularly obnoxious in the assault; and on the yelling grimalkins taking to flight, he found that his trenchant whinger had amputated, not the limb of a cat, but the fair and handsome arm of a young woman; and on a finger of the hand he found his own ring, and knew thereby that he had betrothed himself to a witch!

He never recovered his horror of this adventure; he became more reckless of life than ever, and perished some years after in the famous Raid of the Redswire, on the green ridge of the Carterfells, pierced by three English arrows. This was the last conflict of any importance fought on the Borders prior to the union of the Crowns, and was chiefly remarkable from the circumstance that the Scots won the day by being well supplied with firearms, while the English had only the long-bow, with bill and spear.

CHAPTER XXII.

WHAT THE MORROW BROUGHT FORTH.

CYRIL found that a note had come from Lady Ernescleugh, inviting all at Willowdean to dine with her, *en famille*, to talk over their plans for the future season in London, when it came. “As for Edinburgh,” she added, “with its eight assemblies,

and a few club balls, all so mixed, it is not to be thought of in these railway times. What suited our grandmothers won't suit us, who have young folks to introduce in society."

So Cyril found that the carriage and pony-phaeton had been ordered, as all were going to the Cleugh, save poor little Miss M'Caw, whom Lady Ernescleugh had omitted, notwithstanding her long pedigree; but then it was only a Highland one, as her ladyship thought, "and those people all boast of such, whether they are Peers of the realm or street-porters."

Ere long we shall have more startling events to describe than dinners, drives, or luncheons, and so shall only say that the "festive board" at Ernescleugh, a fine mansion facing the sea, and perched on a lofty eminence, was like any other in a wealthy and noble family.

Before the windows, stretched away in distance the vast extent of the dark blue German Sea, with here and there a white sail, or the long wreathed smoke of a steamer visible; and just as the company sat down to dinner, they might have seen, had not the curtains been closely drawn, the light on the Isle of May, about five-and-twenty miles distant, at the mouth of the Firth of Forth, twinkling redly out upon the waste of waters.

Save the wines, everything on the table was Scotch: the fish were from the adjacent sea or the Leader; the beef and mutton bred and fed on the Lammermuir hills; the vegetables and flowers were reared by the gardener at Ernescleugh; but all these figured in the bill of fare under French names, as *potages*, *poissons*, *relevés*, and *entrées*—a source of sore bewilderment to plain folks like the Rev. Gideon M'Guffog, parish minister; Dr. Squilla, the Lawyer, and the Baron Bailie of Willowdean, when once or so in the year they were invited to a state dinner at Ernescleugh.

Everard Home, the Master, a fashionable looking young man of a very good style, in absence of the Lord, his father, who was on diplomatic service in the Ionian Isles, placed Lady Wedderburn on his right. Sir John handed the hostess to her place, and Cyril, to his mother's satisfaction, led in Gwenny; but then no other lady was present.

When Cyril looked at the unexceptionable wife his mother urged upon him, with her delicate neck and arms, so snow-white when contrasted with her black dress and jet ornaments, her rich Indian shawl of alternate black, gold, and scarlet stripes, diamonds flashing out here and there, as bright as her own eyes, his mind wandered away involuntarily to little lonely Mary, in her plain stuff attire, her sole ornaments a brooch and collar.

Lady Ernescleugh, a more showy, dowager-looking, and

though fair-haired, an older and haughtier style of woman than Lady Wedderburn, with very good taste, wore a black dress of the richest velvet, trimmed only with silver grey *grebe*, as all her guests were in mourning, and both families had been intimate for years.

As three of the gentlemen present belonged to the service, a little shop would creep into their conversation, which ran chiefly on the approaching war, and the mustering of armaments by sea and land; for by the London papers of the previous day it was fast becoming apparent, as the Master said, "that matters were looking less and less rosy in the East;" and Lady Ernescleugh, who had recently got him transferred from the line to the Scots Fusileer Guards, in the hope that he might soldier only in London, and never encounter harder service than might be seen at Windsor, in the Wellington Barracks, at the Bank, or the Tower, was both alarmed and disgusted to find that several battalions of the Household Brigade were detailed to form a portion of the army of the East—the force destined to protect Turkey from the Russians; "those barbarous Russians," she added, "whom she and Ernescleugh, when he was Ambassador at St. Petersburg, found to be little better than their forefathers are described to have been under Catharine."

"The Semiramis of the North," said Robert Wedderburn.

"And we all know how wicked *her* times were," said Lady Ernescleugh.

How little could Cyril foresee to what this conversation was to lead; when the young host said, laughing—

"By Jove, mother, there is more wickedness now in the world than ever existed then. Yes, even among ourselves," he added, wiping the champagne froth from his fair moustache, "only we don't always see it."

"How, Everard? I do not understand."

"It is more subtle, more refined, more cunning, and much better bred."

"The latter is certainly some advantage," said Cyril.

"Besides, Wedderburn, we don't call our little peccadilloes by such deuced hard names as our rough ancestors did—that is all."

"I do not quite understand you, Everard," said Lady Ernescleugh, smiling, but with a little air of pique; "you seem to be aiming at something or some one."

Cyril, who had been talking to Gwenny, now became aware that the Master was bending over his wine glass, and saying something to Horace Ramornie, in a low tone, but laughing and confidentially. He detected the name of "Mary Lennox," and after a time those alarming words, "By Jove, Ramornie, it

could not be termed a summer flirtation, as he was driving her home through the *snow*, at midnight, too. Queer, is it not? for we all know the fellow's character: but then the poor girl is so left to herself, in that old house by her ailing father, that"—here his voice sank lower—"but it is a pity, for she is so pretty!"

What had happened? To whom was he referring? Cyril felt his ears tingling, his heart grow still, and his face turn pale; all the more so that the clear keen eyes of his mother were on him, and he remembered the conversation in her boudoir.

He burned with impatience until the three ladies withdrew to the drawing-room; and the moment they had been bowed out, and he and the other gentlemen resumed their seats, ere closing up towards their young host, he very plainly asked, "what they had been talking about?"

"The strangest thing in the world," replied Horace, with a serious expression in his quiet dark eyes; "a scandalous story concerning the daughter of old Oliver Lennox, of Lonewoodlee. Of course, you know the girl; by sight, at least."

"Scandalous!" repeated Cyril, making a violent effort to control himself, though there came a flash from his eye, lurid as that from a cannon's mouth, and there came a terrible frown from his brow, which he concealed by resting it on his hand. "And this story?"

"Is, that she spent a night in the house of Chesterhaugh."

"Take care, take care," said Sir John; "she represents one of the oldest families in the Merse."

"A fact!" persisted the Master of Ernescleugh, in a low tone; "she spent there a night, or nearly so, about the time you were so mysteriously missing, Wedderburn. I was riding home from Greenlaw, accompanied by a groom; there had been a severe fall of snow, and just as we drew near the gate of Chesterhaugh, it was opened by old Tony Heron, the keeper, and out came Rooke Chesters, in that bang-up waggonette of his, with Miss Lennox seated by his side. I could swear to her, though she was well muffled up in a railway-rug. The time was past twelve, and he was evidently driving her home! Now we all know that ladies, old or young, don't visit Rooke Chesters. It is an ugly story, and I would rather not have known it."

Cyril's voice sounded strange, even to himself; but he asked, calmly—

"Did you see her face, Home?"

"No. She was closely veiled; but I know her little hat with the golden pheasant's plume."

Cyril remembered that he had shot that pheasant.

"Did you speak with her?"

"No. We passed each other at a hard trot."

"Then what proof have you, beyond mere suspicion, that the lady was Miss Lennox at all?"

There was something categorical in Cyril's tone which made Everard Home tug his moustache; but he replied—

"My groom got a match for his cigar from the gatekeeper, Tony Heron, whose information put the matter beyond a doubt, and Chesters' groom, Trayner, confirmed the story next day, with many a joke Miss Lennox would not like to have heard. But pass the wine, the decanters stand with you, my Royal Fusileer."

What horrible mystery, worse even than that of his own disappearance, lay concealed under all this? Was Rooke Chesters ordained by fate to be the evil genius of them both? Heron, the gatekeeper, the groom of Chesters, and Kernesclough were cognizant of the story, and Mary's name and honour were a joke and a source of vulgar and malevolent speculation in every servants'-hall and household in the Merse! A stunned sensation came over him. Even were the story utterly false it was a terrible one, and the most degrading deductions would be drawn from it; and even as he sat and thought over it, mechanically passing the decanter, and filling and emptying his glass, an age seemed to have elapsed since yester-evening by the stile—a mighty gulf to have opened between him and Mary Lennox.

"I usually make it a legal rule," said Robert Wedderburn, "only to believe the half of what I see, and nothing that I simply hear. These groom fellows may have been mistaken, after all; but it is passing strange!"

Cyril could have embraced his brother for these words; but still the story had gone abroad.

Cyril now remembered of Mary admitting that Chesters had addressed her in the language of love; and yet she had ventured to spend some hours—gossips said a night—in the house, the house of a man with a reputation so tainted.

He also remembered her strange emotion when they last met. Was it compunction for her own perfidy, or affected doubt of his love, or neither, or what was it? Alas! he knew not what or whom to believe in now.

Her doubts must have been of herself and of her own faith; not of him or his faith! His Mary, so pure and gentle in eye and manner, to be subjected even to the glances of a man like Rooke Chesters was exasperating. What then was he to think of the companionship of hours? He knew that Chesters visited occasionally her bedridden father, hence an interview could be nothing novel to either; but fast in his passionate and impul-

sive heart, the emotions of jealousy, doubt, and mortification became predominant.

He almost loathed the master of Ernesleugh for his unwitting communication ; but he concealed all he felt, for the bitter conviction forced itself upon him, that if Mary Lennox were unworthy of his love, there would then be more reason than ever to hide that love from all. So those who saw him, as he sat at table chatting of politics, the coming war, the points of this horse or that terrier or pointer, could little have dreamed of the volcano that was in his heart, through which a hundred varying emotions were sweeping.

There were utter perplexity and keen distress ; shame and doubt, jealousy and wounded self-esteem. Could it really be the case that she had encouraged the advances of two—of Chesters and himself—as lovers, and on hearing of the loss of one who had gone, actually gone to the house of the other ? He had known of such things. There was his old flame at Canterbury, who had beaded the cigar-case ; but, pshaw ! she was a garrison-hack of ten years standing, and was known to every corps from Chatham to China.

What did it all mean, or what *would* it all mean ? To be the rival of Chesters would be humiliation enough. He was grieved and maddened by the whole affair ; for his secret love, the light and joy of his soul, was about to be quenched now.

His family—his mother, at least—had heard of it ; and knowing, as they and she did, the reputation of Chesters, could he speak now of making her his wife ; and yet he loved her so ! Surely she would be able to explain it all ; but still the ugly *cause* for explanation existed.

Why had she concealed the whole circumstances from him ? Why such reticence ? There was something in this fact that filled him with dire and dark suspicion, and but yesterday he had placed a ring on her wedding finger, a token of their solemn betrothal before God, and amid the silence of the starlight and the dewy evening he had tenderly taken her to his breast and called her his wife—“ *the wife of his heart*,” and yet she had acted thus in the time of his absence—of his supposed death—and made her name and honour the sport of gossips, of grooms and gatekeepers !

If so artful, why decline on any terms or pretence the proposal of marriage he had made her ? Chesters had insinuated something to her of himself (Cyril) and Gwenny, something to excite her jealousy and to pique her by her own admission ; thus they must have been talking confidentially, and to what purpose ?

So did he torment himself, viewing the circumstances in all its worst points. Glass after glass of strong, deep-coloured, and

heady old Madeira did Cyril imbibe ; and then others of Grande Chartreuse and Curaçoa, by way of *chasse-café*, ere the gentlemen took their coffee and joined the ladies ; indeed Cyril, though invariably most temperate, on this night seemed not to care how much he drank, provided he drowned, or even deadened, care for the time.

On entering the drawing-room he was painfully conscious, by a peculiar expression, almost a radiant one, in his mother's face, that Lady Ernescleugh had told her the whole of this obnoxious story, this horrible *esclandre*, about the girl he had hoped or meant to marry ; to whom he was solemnly but secretly plighted, and whom he loved with inexpressible tenderness.

There was a steady glitter in his mother's eye that provoked him, and he turned to Gwenny, who was idling over the keys of the piano, as if waiting for some one to speak with her.

He said something, he knew not what, and she replied without his seeming to hear or understand her ; but she immediately began to play with more animation. How nimbly and gracefully her white fingers wandered over the ivory keys, making even them seem almost dull in colour by comparison ; and he looked on, and turned the leaves of the music, as one in a terrible dream, ignorant or heedless whether Gwenny was playing a Highland Reel or the "Soldier's March" in *Faust*, for the soul of him he could not have told, as he heard only the voices of his mother and Lady Ernescleugh, as they lay back in a crimson satin *fauteuil*, with their heads stooped towards each other, and talking over their glittering fans.

"They are no doubt a strange set," said his mother, "that small family of Lonewoodlee" (small, indeed ! thought Cyril). "The father, a quarrelsome old person, has had, as you know, endless law disputes with Sir John ; but luckily for us, has always lost them. A spendthrift, he is now a bankrupt ; and his girl, though so quiet and modest in aspect and manner, must be a designing minx."

"But, my dear Lady Wedderburn, quiet ones are always the deepest. 'Smooth waters,' you are aware," said Lady Ernescleugh, with a little laugh.

"And who knows what she may be, if all were known ?"

"The *esclandre* about visiting a bachelor of Captain Chesters' proclivities does not surprise me a bit ; no doubt it is the result of her bringing-up, or rather the want of bringing-up."

"She has been motherless for years," urged Lady Wedderburn, gently.

"Hence the result," replied Lady Ernescleugh, a cold and haughty dame, who had never perhaps committed a solecism in her life, and never pardoned one in others. "I am so glad we

have never had her here, though the girl is handsome and presentable enough."

"And now that Gwenny has come to Willowdean, my countenancing her, even by a casual bow, is impossible. I have already passed her at church and elsewhere before the story came out; and one cannot be too careful whom one knows, for you are aware, my dear Lady Ernescleugh, that——" and here his mother's voice sank to a whisper, but Cyril was nearly driven mad by what he had heard.

"Dear Aunt," said Gwenny, "I do not know the unfortunate young person of whom you are talking——"

"And must never do so."

"But I am reminded of a maxim of my poor papa's."

"Ah! and this maxim?"

"Was always, 'Sift news first, and swallow it afterwards.' Proverbs are bad taste, I believe; but he often said this when he heard wild stories of Thugs and Dacoits, of stranglings and poisonings, of men being carried off by tigers, and all the odd things that happen in Indian life."

"But, Gwenny," said Cyril, patting her white shoulder, and looking very much as if he would like to kiss her, "this is not India, but prosaic, self-righteous, and censorious Scotland."

"True, Cyril," added Horace Ramornie, who had also drawn near Gwenny; "the world here finds no fault with imprudence, or even wickedness; but great fault with either being found out. So with this girl's rash visit to Chesterhaugh, in which there may have been no harm; but I am sorry for her old father's sake, though I have rarely seen him, and sorry for her own."

"But the fact of spending four or five hours alone with an enterprising fellow like Chesters has an ugly sound about it," said Robert.

"You speak with the natural suspicion of a lawyer; Horace with the generosity of a soldier," retorted Cyril, on whom all these remarks fell like molten lead.

Thus, one of the very ends which Chesters had in view when he took advantage of the snow-storm, and by a special falsehood, framed between him and Trayner, contrived to detain the restless Mary in his house, seemed on the point of being achieved; for there are many men in the world like him—men who seek to blacken the reputation of the very girls they mean to betray, to forward their own purpose by dislocating them from the sympathy, protection, and even compassion of men.

As for the pity of their own sex, that is easily lost!

To Cyril the rest of the evening passed away like a nightmare; and at last, to his infinite relief, the carriage and phaeton came to the door, and Ernescleugh, the frowning rocks, the sea,

and the distant light that twinkled on the Isle of May, were all left behind as they drove homeward inland.

Sir John wished to smoke ; so he, Robert, and Horace were in the open phaeton, while Cyril sat in the carriage with his mother and Gwenny. Of what they had been arranging for the London season he knew nothing, and cared less. When that time came, he should be, he hoped, face to face with the Cossacks.

He was sternly moody and silent, and both failed to extract a word from him. His mother knew his secret ; with her he was past acting, and endurance could endure no more.

She stole her soft hand into his—the hand that in infancy and youth had never tired of caressing him—and whispered in his ear—

“My beloved Cyril, a noble heart like yours was not meant to be wasted on a worthless girl like Mary Lennox of Lonewoodlee.”

Cruel words, though she said them ever so softly and tenderly ; but they put a finishing stroke to his misery, and he started as if stung by a wasp.

On arriving at home, he hastened to his own room, and desired Gervase Asloane, the butler, to bring him a bumper of champagne ; and with the wine Asloane brought him a letter. He tore it open. It was from Chesters, the first he had ever received from him, and he rapidly perused it, with surprise and rage mingling in his heart. It ran thus :—

“Army and Navy Club,
London.

“MY DEAR WEDDERBURN,—Glad to hear of your turning up again in this sublunary sphere ; but sorry that I could not stay at home to congratulate you in person. I suppose we shall see all about it in the papers—*Bell's Life*, most likely ? I had to leave in haste, as Bill Trayner put me up to a good thing or two, about to come off on the Turf. Sir John cashed up your I O U like a brick ; but I mean to let Chesterhaugh—put it out to dry-nurse—and go abroad, or take service in one of the proposed foreign battalions. Have you made up your book ? The City and Suburban is the next good handicap set for decision. Eugenie is said to be really a good thing. Those who back her won't regret it. 10 to 30 are taken for Varna ; and 1000 to 10 against Baltic.” [“What the devil is all this to me !” muttered Cyril. “Bah.”]

“Awful scrape yours was. What the deuce did you do to the bay hunter to render it unmanageable ? How excited that little girl at Lonewoodlee was about the affair. I had no end of trouble, one night, before I got her consoled ; but consoled

she was in the end. And now, with best wishes, old fellow, believe me ever yours faithfully,

“R. R. CHESTERS.”

“Insolent scoundrel !” exclaimed Cyril, before whom came in memory the mocking laugh, the sinister smile, and the green-grey, phosphorescent-like eyes of the writer, as he crushed up the jibing letter, and tossed it in the fire ; but not before he observed that it was sealed with the onyx ring which bore the arms of Louis de la Fosse, the young French traveller whom Chesters had so unmercifully pillaged at play.

There was a tone of banter in Chesters’ letter, and of insolent reference to Mary, that filled the heart of Cyril with fury.

What meant this sudden horror ? Cyril asked in his heart : an intrigue with Chesters at the very time when he himself was supposed to have perished by a violent and mysterious death. How could he question her about it without degradation to them both ? and yet as their mutual relations stood, confidence between them was necessary, most necessary. If he should speak of it, what would her answer be, yea or nay ? If the former, how was she to explain it away ? If the latter, must he believe her ? Oh, it was maddening ! An intrigue with Chesters—of all men in the world, Chesters !

Perhaps it was about her father’s protested bill she had visited him. If so, what terms might not Chesters have made with her for it ? So, as jealousy makes the food it feeds on, he wove endless pictures of treachery and duplicity, and vowed to call out Chesters, and shoot him down like a dog, on the first available opportunity, forgetting that even then, in the year we were to storm the heights of Alma, duels had become out of fashion and forbidden.

He thanked Heaven for the prospect of a speedy war, and a hot one, too. Anything was better than enduring what he suffered. Would he resign his leave and rejoin the Fusileers at once, or remain till the last hour, and make fierce love to his cousin Gwenny ?

Perhaps it was all some horrible mistake, which might be easily explained. But why had Mary so studiously avoided all reference to the circumstance ? Desperately he clung to hope, and resolved himself to see about it. And now he, the heedless young officer, the man of pleasure and amusement, wealth and position, felt for the first time in his life that sickening and gnawing emotion of clamorous anxiety in his heart which Mary had endured during the suspense consequent to his disappearance, since Chesters had engendered in her heart a jealousy of Gwendoleyne Wedderburn, and never perhaps so keenly as on the evening she walked to Chesterhaugh.

Cyril knew that he should have no further opportunity of questioning the Master of Ernescleugh, as the leave of the latter was on the point of expiry, and he was to start by train on the morrow to rejoin his battalion of the Guards in the Wellington Barracks, London.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE DAWN OF LOVE.

PRIOR to all this the intimacy between Horace Ramornie and Gwendoleyne Wedderburn had been ripening with a rapidity that her aunt, had she known of it, would have deemed "frightful" as well as fatal to all her hopes; but still love had never been spoken of between them.

Busy about his estate and the farms thereon; busy too about country matters, and the affairs of the little Burgh of Barony which owned him as patron and superior, Sir John Wedderburn spent much of his time out of doors, and a deal of it in his saddle. Cyril had been entirely occupied by his own secret passion, while Robert was sulky, and affected to be deep in his legal studies, reading up for a forthcoming examination, and frequently went alone fishing. As the household was in mourning there were few invitations given, and few visitors at Willowdean; hence, in spite of all Lady Wedderburn's plans, Horace—not Cyril—and Gwenny were generally thrown together; and what could be more natural than that the young people should learn to love each other!

Yet he dared not speak of the passion that was growing in his heart.

Lady Wedderburn had not been without a dread that the Master of Ernescleugh, young Everard Home, who was every way an agreeable and remarkably good-looking man, might "cut out" both her sons. Gwenny knew that he was the heir to a peerage, and rank would have much weight in the mind of an Indian-bred girl; so she was thankful when his leave of absence expired, and he was recalled to London. She did not speak again to Cyril of Mary Lennox, either tauntingly or otherwise; but once she said to her husband—

"Cyril has been looking pale and unhappy of late, and I know it must be caused by that artful girl at Lonewoodlee. What does the foolish fellow go on about? Absurd! It is only a girl's pretty face, after all."

"Have you forgotten the days of your own youth, and what your face was then to me as Kate Douglas? Ay, and is so still," said the good-natured Baronet, pinching her chin.

"True ; but I didn't gad about the country alone on snowy nights with men like Rooke Chesters. Cyril is conscious of her unworthiness ; so it is only the memory of a face that disturbs him."

"Don't worry poor Cyril ; once with his regiment, he may forget all about her. Yet what does a poet say ?—

" ' Only the face of a woman ;
 Only a face—nothing more !
 But the memory of that sweet vision
 Comes back to my heart o'er and o'er.
 Only a woman's soft eyes ;
 Only a look, that was all ;
 A glance that I chanced to encounter
 Still binds my soul in thrall.' "

It was at a ball of the Caledonian Hunt, we first met, Kate. And never forget you were once young."

Gwendoleyne Wedderburn thought there was some analogy in the destiny of herself and Horace from the fact of being so young, and having come, like herself, to Willowdean in his boyhood, without father or mother. Horace was a smart sub-altern in the Line now, and had quite considered himself a man in all respects for a few years past ; but Gwenny loved to think of him as the lonely boy he had been ; for his manner was grave and gentle, and his voice and smile were ever sweet and pleasant to her.

Cyril, we have said, was pre-occupied, and Robert had enough of the student in him to be somewhat brusque, so Horace she preferred undisguisedly, to the infinite chagrin of Lady Wedderburn ; and, if truth must be told, somewhat to the amusement of Sir John, who, though he would have been pleased enough to see his son with a bride so suitable and wealthy, was an enemy to all match-making.

The large and stately house of Willowdean, with its shady library, its galleried conservatory, its long corridors hung with valuable pictures, and its spacious garden, was a pleasant place for such sweet companionship ; and whatever young Ramornie did, when not with Gwenny, was always done as if in a kind of dream to occupy the *blank* of time when he could not be with her.

How would time be occupied when they should be parted, perhaps to meet no more !

The garden was older than the house, having belonged to his predecessor, the ancient mansion, "the peel and fortalice of Willowdean ;" thus its yew hedges and boxwood borders were thick and dense beyond any to be seen in gardens of more modern date ; and in the centre stood the ancient sun-dial, by the gnomon of which Sir John's forefathers had set or regulated their round silver watches that were like turnips in shape, and

had perhaps wooden wheels that were worked by "thorl and string."

As yet the garden was only in bud, and there for the first time Gwenny heard with wonder the voice of the cuckoo when she and Horace were planting some rare Indian seeds which she had brought from the Choultry; and she sighed when reflecting that he must be so far away when these seeds became flowers in all their tropical glory; and when (then so bleak and bare), with its famous ribbon-borders of every imaginable colour, the hedges of azaleas and drooping fuchsias under the shelter of the older rows of privet and yew, the clusters of beautiful shrubs and beds of geraniums, verbenas, and calceolarias were in all the bloom and splendour of summer.

And many a delightful drive they had in the park when Gwenny usually took the reins of the pony-phaeton, for there the grass was smooth as a billiard-table, having been carefully rolled and mowed in season, ever since clover-seeds had first been sown in it, in 1708, by Sir Cyril Wedderburn—the same Baronet who drank the health of James VIII., sword in hand, at Greenlaw Cross, when the Comte de Forbin's fleet, with the Scots and Irish Brigades on board, was off the Isle of May; who nearly rabbled out the Union Parliament, and played many other political pranks in his time.

The month was still March; but already the park—or "policy," as the Scots called it—was sheeted with pale yellow primroses, where, in the next month the Lent lilies would be in all their golden bloom.

But their drives were not confined to the park, for frequently they had the open carriage. Then Lady Wedderburn and Miss M'Caw were always present; and, as the large and handsome vehicle bowled along the smooth roads, Gwenny would laugh, and like a happy child, clap her hands to the two white-and-black spotted Dalmatian dogs, which bounded along on each side, caracoling amid the dust, and seeming to exult in the dignity of being outriders to such an equipage, reminding her of the bare-footed *suwaries* she had often seen running beside the elephant of a native prince on the plain of the Choultry.

Poor Horace, however, saw the views and wishes of his aunt pretty plainly, for she was unskilful enough to show her hand to all but Gwenny.

He knew, and felt keenly conscious, of all he owed to the uncle upon whom he had been cast in boyhood, a penniless orphan: his education, his commission and yearly allowance; and though loving Gwenny passionately, and with all his soul—for she seemed the realization of the wife he could love, the ideal of his dreamy hours—he shrank from any declaration that might, perhaps, mar the plans of those to whom he owed every-

thing in the world, and also mar, it might be, the fortune of his relation, his brother officer and friend, for he was ignorant of the recent ties already formed by Cyril.

It was hard for Horace to know and feel that the love he had longed for, the wife he had pictured in many a vision of fervid fancy, was now daily by his side, and yet that he dared not look upon her as more than a friend; while, at the same time, it was impossible to resist the charm, the delight, the intoxication of her presence, and the craving to seek her society; to listen to her voice, to look into her softly-lidded eyes, that were by turns shy, passionate, and full of child-like surprise; to touch her hand timidly, and think of all that *might* have been.

Ah, what did it all matter! A little time, and it would be a thing of the past, this delightful companionship. Miles upon miles of land and sea must be between them, and the Russian hordes would be before him.

Yet often was the perilous secret, that he loved her, on the point of his lips, on certain occasions that suddenly seemed to invite it.

Attended by a groom they had ridden one day past the house, the park, and woods of Ernescleugh, to the verge of the cliff over which Cyril had been dragged by his horse. The tide was out, and the isolated rock from which he had been rescued by the crew of the fisher-smack was plainly visible, with the gulls wheeling in circles, and the white waves boiling round it.

Gweny was shuddering as she looked alternately down at the rock and upward at the ruins of Fast Castle, perched on the giddy verge of a tremendous cliff, the fragment of a baronial tower "twixt cloud and ocean hung," with the blue sky visible through its fissures and gaping windows. Laying his right hand on her reins, as if to steady her horse, which the booming of the waves below and the screaming of the sea-birds above had startled, he sought in reality but to touch the pretty bridle-hand that was cased in its tight black leather riding gauntlet, as he said—

"I think you admire this sample of our grim Scottish scenery, Miss Wedderburn?"

"Before I answer you," said she, looking with a bright smile under her veil, which the wind was blowing out like a pennant, "you must tell me why you persist in calling me Miss Wedderburn? Did I not say once before that you were to call me Gweny? *Miss* sounds so stiff! All the family at Willowdean, and even cold and hard Lady Ernescleugh, call me Gweny."

"And by that name I always think of you—in my heart."

"Then call me Gweny, I insist, as I once did before."

"I do not like to do so, when, when——"

"Is not the name pretty? It was my mamma's."

"Apart from itself, association will ever render it adorable to me."

"Well?"

"Somehow I don't like to do so when Lady Wedderburn is present; something tells me that she would not be pleased," replied Horace, blushing in spite of himself, and then the girl blushed too, for she began to see something of his meaning and the inferences to be drawn from what he said. "But," he added, retaining her reins and hand in his for a little way, "let us leave this giddy verge; it is dangerous with a shying horse."

The groom drew near to make the same remark, and so the occasion was lost.

At another time the news came that the Queen, in conjunction with the Emperor of the French, had at last declared war against Russia!

Gweny's dark eyes were upon Horace as he read the *Times* aloud in the conservatory, with a flush on his cheek and a strange emotion in his heart.

"All leaves will be cancelled now!" said he.

"And you, cousin Horace, you will be quite anxious to find yourself in Turkey?"

"I *was* anxious," said he, in a low voice.

"And what has made you change your mind; surely not dread of danger?"

Her question was a home thrust; but he only answered curtly, while his heart beat quicker and his cheek grew pale—

"I am a soldier, Gweny."

"Then what has caused the change?"

"Dare I tell you?" he asked in a low and tremulous voice, as he took her hand; "but no, I dare not," he added.

Nor could he have done so then, for Lady Wedderburn was not far from them, feeding a screaming paroquet, whose neck Horace could have wrung with stern joy. Still he was venturing to say something more in an incoherent and desponding way, when Gweny came close to him, with her soft, serene, and loving eyes smiling into his, and placing her rapid little hand on his mouth, she said—

"Now, Horace, if you love me, silence; for sadness worries me, and I won't be worried or sad till you are gone; and then Heaven knows I shall be sad enough."

She joined her aunt, and again the secret remained untold.

"If I love her!" thought Horace, with a choking sensation in his throat; but Gweny had begun to suspect or feel all that he had left untold, through "that silent method of communion which no crowd can prevent persons who know each other well from interchanging."

To all the beauty we have described, a beauty that was dark

and pale, yet sparkling, Gwendoleyne added a manner that came with her Welsh blood ; it was full of those nameless and indescribable charms which the French, ever so happy in apt phraseology, term *folâtre et caressante*, winning and playful ; but there is no perfection out of novels and romances, so Gwenny, with all her loveliness, was *not* perfect. She had a fiery little temper at times, which, like her dark eyes and their long lashes, she inherited with her Welsh blood ; but she was all perfection to young Horace Ramornie, and in the core of his heart he idolized her !

CHAPTER XXIV.

PARTED IN SORROW.

IN the dining-room at Lonewoodlee Mary was seated in the deep recess of a window. She was sewing, and singing merrily the while. She felt happy, light in heart, and high in spirit, unusually so for her ; but ever and anon she paused in her work and even in her song to contemplate her new ring and recall the exact words of Cyril when he placed it on her finger, the expression of his eyes, and the tone of his voice.

The window was open, for the time was noontide, the day was warm and sunny, and the spring freshness in the atmosphere was delightful. The bleating of the sheep that browsed close by the Tower, the voices of the birds that twittered in the old trees and shrubbery, with the hum of insect life, all came pleasantly to the girl's ear, so, as we have said, at times her song died away, and her needle paused as she sank into happy thought, and abandoning herself to her day dreams, repeated, "Wife of my heart ; ah, he called me so ; the wife of *his* heart !"

So pre-occupied was Mary that she did not hear the hoofs of a horse approach the Tower, nor the ringing of the door-bell announce a visitor, till Alison Home, her face a little flushed with surprise and importance, placed in her hand the card of

CYRIL WEDDERBURN,

Royal Fusiliers.

"Where is he—this gentleman?" asked Mary, starting from her seat.

"In his saddle at the door ; but he asks if he can see you, Miss Lennox."

"Show him in at once, Alison."

When their past mode of meeting and corresponding are considered, it may easily be supposed that a visit from Cyril,

openly, formally, and at such an early hour as noon, filled Mary with anxiety, excitement, and alarm! To visit thus had long ceased to be his use and wont, after the quarrels ensued with his family; so what could it portend? With true feminine instinct she glanced at a mirror—one of those quaint, old-fashioned, carved plate glasses with bevelled borders, set in an ebony frame—gave a final smooth to her rich brown hair, and was not ill-pleased to find, that though she was scarcely dressed in a style to receive visitors, she wore a morning robe of spotted muslin that was very becoming, and from the frilled sleeves and neck of which her taper arms and slender throat came forth to the best advantage.

Save his ring, ornament she had none.

Cyril was ushered in with hat and whip in hand, and the moment their eyes met, her heart became filled with dismay. He did not approach her or take her hand, even the faint sickly smile that conventionalism or good-breeding had spread over his face passed away, and he stood looking at her irresolutely, and keeping the dining-table between them.

Grieved and exasperated as he was by the ugly story he had heard so recently, Cyril glanced sadly from Mary to the old faded portraits that hung on the walls—older they were than some of the ancestry at Willowdean—and much of sorrow and pity began to mingle with his indignation. And there, too, were the arms and monogram of Oliver Lennox, who had been a good man and true to his Queen in the stormy times of the Reformation, carved above the antique fireplace, which looked so quaint with its heavy Scoto-Italian mouldings of stone; but in the old-fashioned basket grate there burned a cheerful fire, composed less of coal than of cuttings from the thicket without, roots, fircones, and peat.

"Oh, Cyril," exclaimed Mary, piteously, "what has happened—what is amiss? You have such a pale and tell-tale face! You neither take my hand nor seat yourself."

"Nor shall I do either until you have heard me—if I even do so then, Mary," said he slowly, as if to gain time or arrange his perplexed thoughts, and doubtful in what terms to break the purpose of his unhappy visit, she looked so charming in that plain undress, so gentle-eyed and dove-like. "Things were said of you last night by Everard Home, my mother, and Lady Ernescleugh, that have rent my heart asunder. Long, long will their words haunt me. Oh, Mary, I shall not readily forget that dinner at Ernescleugh!"

Mary now knew all; the Master *had* recognized her on that fatal night, when, in her innocence and helplessness, she fell into the species of snare contrived for her by Chesters and his roguish groom. Dropping her needlework, she grasped the

back of a chair for support, and asked, with something of *hauteur*, nevertheless—

"And what did you say, Cyril, when those people dared to say hard things of me?"

"Say, girl! what could I say? I sat and smiled, I suppose. I was in good society, where people must hide every emotion, and had to smile like the Spartan boy I spoke of; and to smile thus is too often the hardest portion of the weary battle of life."

"To the point, Cyril—oh, of what do they accuse me?"

"On the night of the snow-storm, you visited the house of Chesterhaugh; you were there for hours, and Everard Home saw you leaving the gate, at midnight, in Chesters' waggonette, and seated by his side. Home's groom saw this too! Was such a visit, in such a time of supposed grief, and to such a man, becoming in the girl whom I loved, and who I thought loved me? Even though I was believed to be dead, was it becoming in your father's daughter? He is, I know, a ruined man; but ruin or improvidence cannot blot out the past, or alter the fact that he is a gentleman descended from as good blood as any in Scotland—not that most folks set much store on that nowadays, but I do. Oh, that I had indeed been drowned—that I had perished on that night of terror, rather than have lived to hear this said of Mary Lennox, that she is no longer worthy of me!"

"Cruel, Cyril! Oh, how cruel is all this of you!" said Mary, wringing her hands.

"Oh, Mary, Mary! God alone knows how I have loved you, and how I love you still; but even were that story not true, that such should be said of you—my future wife—tears up my heart by the roots."

"But it is true," said Mary.

"What was your reason for such a visit and at such a time?"

"Oh, Cyril, the best," said Mary, with a bursting heart, while she stretched her trembling hand towards him, for his somewhat imperious manner chilled and scared her.

"Why were my informants of a circumstance so strange and improper first the Master of Ernescleugh, and then Chesters himself? What was *your* motive for concealment?"

"A good one. I felt assured that you might disapprove of it, and I was powerless; I had no control over my stay there. I was in Chesterhaugh certainly, but I did not go to visit Captain Chesters. I was lured in; the snow fell: I could not get away; and—and—oh, how can you speak to me thus, and think such things of me!"

Cyril bit his nether lip passionately, for the jesting words, the

sneer of Chesters, that "she was consoled in the end," seemed burnt into his heart.

"I care not now for your motive, or even to inquire into it. Mary Lennox, we cannot undo the past; what I have to think of is the future."

"Oh, Cyril, bear with me, and hear a very simple explanation connected with yourself."

But he would listen to nothing, and exclaimed, in a hollow tone—

"Oh, has God no pity for love lost, for trust misplaced, and a heart wasted as mine has been on you!"

"I am innocent, Cyril, innocent of wrong, even of error," said Mary, with simple dignity; and had he not been goaded by his own angry thoughts and the galling words of others, he might have read the assurance of what she said in the expression of her face, in her clear earnest eyes, her parted lips, and her very attitude, as she stood with outstretched hands. "I am guiltless of all blame, and a day must come when God will clear me."

"The day may come—but too late," said he, hoarsely and gloomily.

"Never too late if we are both on this side of the grave, Cyril; yet, thank Heaven, this life does not last for ever."

"And your father's?" said he, reproachfully.

"Oh, Cyril, your rebuke is just!" said Mary, in a flood of tears; "but your anger is not so, and it makes me so miserable."

"You can have no explanation to give, and I seek nothing beyond the admission of the fact," said Cyril, with a cold severity that afterwards surprised himself; "and now I quit you. Thank fate, we are on the eve of a war. A few days—ay, perhaps but a few hours—and I shall leave you and all the folly of regret and love behind me, to enter on a stirring and a glorious career. Adieu! Never more shall we be as we have been; never more shall we meet where we have met so often! All is at an end between us, Mary; and from this hour our paths in life must lie for ever apart!"

The door closed; she heard the clatter of his horse's hoofs die away in the distance, and then she knew that Cyril was gone—gone, without even asking, or learning the *cause* of her visit to Chesterhaugh.

She felt that he had treated her both harshly and unjustly, and the sense of that bore her up for a time; but a time only.

As one in a dream, she still clutched the back of the chair to prevent herself from falling. The bleating of the sheep in the meadow, the voices of the birds in the trees and among the ivy that rustled on the old Tower wall, and the hum of the

insects, were all in her ears as before. Her eyes wandered over the pastoral Lammermuir hills with something of a hunted and despairing expression in them ; of wild anxiety, as though peace and rest lay somewhere far beyond, and the whole interview seemed like a dream—an unreality.

Nothing was distinct ; she felt as if struggling with a nightmare.

After a time, and as the day wore on, she began to perceive the realities of her position, and to feel the imperative necessity for a complete explanation with Cyril ; but she was overwhelmed by the false position in which she was placed, by shame, anger, and unmerited mortification, that such a story should have gone abroad in the fashion it had done, and she knew how it would be viewed by the severe and censorious.

She knew that "woman is woman's worst foe," and to be pointed at by stern spinsters, with rigid religious and moral opinions—spinsters who never missed sermon or communion, or omitted their names in such lists as *printed* the names of the charitable, and who had in their hearts only a pretended horror for the mammon of unrighteousness—would be terrible and humiliating in the extreme.

From the dinner-table at Earnescleugh, she knew, or feared, the story in many exaggerated forms would spread like wildfire among the professing Christians and stern Church—we beg their pardon—*Kirk-goers*, and nasal-singing Pharisees of Willowdean ; and that many hands and eyes would be uplifted in dismay at the "shortcomings of the daughter of Lonewoodlee."

She knew, also, how utterly merciless such local gossips were ; but to be an object of speculation to the self-righteous on one hand, and to be pitied and misjudged by those who had loved her on the other, was a fear that proved bitter as the waters of Marah—yea, more bitter than death could be—to the sensitive Mary Lennox. She felt humbled, and seemed to have made acquaintance with degradation, she knew not why.

Oh, how in her heart she hated that man Chesters, who had caused all this misery !

But Cyril would come again to Lonewoodlee, to console and to comfort her.

"After all the vows we have exchanged—after all our hours of happiness together—Cyril, Cyril ! how could you leave me thus cruelly and coldly ?" she would exclaim, almost aloud, while wringing her poor hands in a paroxysm of grief.

Sometimes, when an emotion of anger at his determined injustice and assumption of her guilt got the better of her sorrow, she drew the betrothal ring *almost* off her finger, and as often kissed and slid it back again, loth, by removing it, entirely to break the spiritual link or tie between herself and Cyril Wedderburn.

"He will come to me again," she often whispered in her heart, fondly. "Oh, yes; he must come to me once more."

But days went by, and Mary watched and wept, for the days became weeks and months; yet Cyril Wedderburn came no more to Lonewoodlee.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE TELEGRAM.

So infirm was he of purpose, notwithstanding his severity with Mary, that he had barely quitted her presence and ridden off, ere he began to relent towards her; and then the mocking story of Everard Home, and the cruel and stinging passage of Chesters' letter, came back to memory, tearing the wound afresh to exasperate him: and now events succeeded each other with considerable rapidity.

The whole of the afternoon subsequent to his interview with Mary, Cyril secluded himself in his own room; there he wrote three letters to her, full of sorrow for what he termed her error, with the earnest advice and hope that, if ever she required a friend—oh, how cold seemed the word!—she should remember him; but each production in turn dissatisfied him. He knew not how the tenor of them might sound when read, so each in succession was concluded only to be torn up and committed to the flames; and in this state of indecision he remained until the first gong for dinner resounded in the lofty vestibule below.

Under his very window, as he wrote, he could hear his father's groom openly relating to one of the gardeners Mr. Bill Trayner's very coarse and freely garnished account of the visit paid by "old Lennox's daughter to the Captain on the night of the storm."

It was evident to all how moody Cyril had become; and on this day he felt relieved rather than bored, as he usually was, by the presence of the Reverend Mr. McGuffog, a prosy old man; the nervous, but good-natured Dr. Squills, and the Baron Bailie, whom Sir John had brought home with him, as he wished their conjunct advice about some local matter.

Cyril knew that the eyes of his mother, Horace, and Robert, were on him; and although the two last-named suspected that he had some little interest at Lonewoodlee, the former knew to a certainty the cause of that gloom and depression which, to do him justice, he endeavoured to conceal. He strove to interest himself in the minister's chief topics, an augmentation of his stipend and repairs of the manse; with the Doctor on the important subjects of compulsory vaccination, and his

quarrels with the parochial board; and even with the Baron Bailie, who was a grocer in the Vennel of Willowdean, on the probable war-prices of butter and cheese; but he was glad, when he had done his duty thus, to turn to Gwenny, and rest his head thoughtfully on his hand, through the fingers of which his hair stole in dark and glossy brown locks, close, thick, and crisp; and Lady Wedderburn, as she saw their faces bent near each other, looked at them admiringly, and thought how handsome they were, and how admirably suited to each other.

But the world is full of cross-purposes, and while Cyril poured some good-natured nothings into Gwenny's ear, her eyes, from time to time, sought those of Horace Ramornie.

An unusually important ring at the hall-door bell reached the ears even of those at the dinner table, and made all exchange glances, just as Lady Wedderburn and Gwenny rose to retire; but the entrance of Gervase Asloane, with a suspicious looking yellow document on a silver salver, made them pause.

"A telegram for Mr. Cyril—for the Captain I mean," said the old man, in a subdued voice, and, as Cyril tore it open, his mother grew pale as a lily.

"From whom is it, dearest?" she asked, drawing near.

"The Colonel."

A low exclamation escaped her.

"He telegraphs, 'We are to embark for the East on the 5th proximo, so you have not a moment to lose in rejoining. Provide yourself with a good six-chambered revolver. All ours have done so. Tell Ramornie that he is detailed for the Dépôt, so his leave remains intact.'"

A bright flush spread over Cyril's face as he read. There in action, far away from Willowdean and Lonewoodlee, and from all his present bitter associations and mortifications, was a relief opened suddenly up; yet his eyes turned to the sad, the earnest and anxious look of his poor mother, who, instead of retiring to the drawing-room, reseated herself at the table for a little time, with her eyes full of tears.

Heartfelt and well-bred hopes were expressed by the Minister, the Doctor, and the Baron Bailie, that he and all his comrades might have a pleasant and prosperous voyage to the land of the Turk and the Heathen, "whither," added the Minister, "no Christian soldiery had gone since the Twelfth Crusade, so ours was an epoch in the world's history;" but there might be no actual war after all, for was not this an age of subtle diplomacy and peace-making at any price; and to these last expressions of hope, his mother clung desperately, with a sob in her throat and a prayer in her heart; but Sir John, who was a bitter enemy of Lord Aberdeen's Government, and was suspicious of his Russian sympathies, pretty broadly "d—d the notion of

peace at any price, and hoped the day would never come when Britannia, if smitten on one cheek, would quietly turn the other!"

"You'll not be long behind me, Horace, I fear," said Cyril, gaily, as he took off his wine; "the service companies are barely the full strength, and we shall soon have gaps to fill. Gervase," he added, turning to the old butler, who lingered nervously behind his chair. With an expression in his face that indicated a desire to "whimper," and to pat Cyril on the head or back, as he had often done in boyhood, "you'll have all my traps packed and brought down-stairs. Have the carriage brought round in time for the night train for England."

Before this, Cyril had been, perhaps, the most silent member of the company; now it was he who talked most and was the gayest; but his mother was voiceless; and even Gwenny felt crushed (and would have been more so had Horace been going), for all knew they were looking on a face they might never see again, and listening to a voice that never more might fall upon their ear.

The fatal telegram!

It lay on the polished table, like an executioner's warrant, to Lady Wedderburn's eyes—the ukase that was to tear her son from her—and she forgot all about her matrimonial schemes and fears of Horace; she only looked at her handsome and curly-headed Cyril, and thought of all that was before him; that terrible perspective; the long voyage in a comfortless hired transport, by the stormy Bay of Biscay, the Mediterranean and the Levant, the Bosphorus and the Black Sea; of the varied climates; and more than all—oh, more than all!—the chances of an unequal and disastrous war against the hordes of Russia. Then her maternal heart died within her; she could only lay her face on his breast and weep.

Many a wife and mother over all the British Isles felt the same emotion at that fatal time, when, after forty years of peace, and Waterloo had become as a tale that is told, the clouds of war began to gather in the North and East; and long, long in London, the mighty heart of the Empire, was remembered that early morning when the drum beat that summoned the Guards, the flower of our army, to the field; on that same morning when sixty thousand citizens of Edinburgh accompanied the departing steps of the King's Own to the ship that bore them away, for all the land was full of sympathy.

Now Cyril hated "a scene."

"What's the row, mamma?" asked he, indignantly. "How often have you seen me leave home to join the Fusileers, and always come back jollier than ever?"

"But you never left Willowdean at such a time of war and peril as this—going from me perhaps never to return, my boy!"

"Kate, my love, do be calm, be sensible," urged Sir John;

and becoming less excited, she left the room, leaning on Gwenny's arm, and urging Cyril soon to join her.

All her future plans and minor considerations, even the dread of Mary Lennox, were merged now in one thought; and when she regarded his fine face and stalwart figure, her memory went back over the sunny days of his boyhood, and to the tenderer time beyond, when, "like the callow cygnet in its nest," he clung to her bosom, when merry bonfires were blazing redly on the Twinlaw and Earlstoun Hill, on Beimerside, and over all the Lammermuirs, from the beautiful vale of the Gala to the terrible rocks of St. Abb, for the birth of an heir to the beloved house of Willowdean.

And now, now, what might it all come to—the care, affection, education, and pride of past years?

A bullet shot from the musket of an unlettered Russian slave, and a tomb without a coffin or a stone!

So might the life of one so loved—the life she had hoped was to stretch so far beyond that of his parents as God should will—pass away. Cyril, whom she had prayed and trusted might live to see his children's children, long after she had been laid in the family vault at Willowdean church. And as she skilfully tormented herself by dark anticipations like these, she turned to Gwenny (who, sooth to say, was somewhat scared by the suddenness of the summons, and her excessive and unwonted burst of grief), and said—

"Oh, Gwenny, why did I ever permit him to be a soldier—why? But regrets are useless now; yet I am very ill used, I think. Horace has neither father nor mother to regret him, and yet he remains with the *Depôt*, as that provoking Colonel says, while Cyril goes abroad with the regiment!"

She glanced at the magnificent French clock, a miracle of sculpture and gilding, that stood on a white marble console table.

In two hours she knew he must be gone.

"Two hours only, Gwenny!" she said.

The gentlemen soon joined them, and then she was compelled to preserve an appearance of calmness. Cyril did not immediately come in with them, and her heart misgave her that perhaps he had started to Lonewoodlee, but he had only visited his own room for a moment to give it a farewell glance, and issue to Gervase some final instructions. His mother now, however, grudged every moment he was absent from her side. Sir John drew near and took her hands caressingly in his own, for their sympathies of course were one, though her emotions were the keener of the two.

The long-looked-for and dreaded day, yea, the very hour, had come when there was to be a final parting; when Cyril's place

and chair would be vacant once more, and Willowdean a broken home ! His sword case and portmanteau were already strapped in the entrance-hall ; and now the little family circle that had lived together in such close and pleasant companionship was to be severed.

The grief of Miss M'Caw was so noisy and uncontrollable that she had to retire to her own room ; and Lady Wedderburn looked almost hostilely, certainly with envy, at her unconscious nephew, who "was detailed for the Dépôt," and whose home leave extended for nearly a month beyond that of Cyril, as the spring drills had not yet commenced.

"I would to Heaven that Horace's leave had been up too," said Lady Wedderburn through her tears, in a whisper to Sir John.

"Why, surely there is time enough for him to go, poor boy !"

"Because we should then have had but one leave-taking, and —and this rioting and romping about with Gwenny is scarcely proper."

"Oh, the old idea ! A month will see it all over ; a memory of the past, and Horace will have other and sterner work on hand than flying over the Merse with a pretty young girl."

"Yes ; but the memory thereof may last with the lives of both."

"Scarcely. Where are now all the girls I flirted with when I was the age of Horace ? Gwenny is only eighteen, at a time when love is often a mere illusion, Kate, that passes away or fixes on some other object, often with perilous rapidity ; so Cyril may have the best chance after all when in a few months he comes back to us," said Sir John, with an external air of confidence and cheerfulness he was far from feeling, as he rose and crossed the room to bid farewell to their three guests, who, finding themselves rather *de trop*, after formally partaking of coffee, were bowed out.

Poor Cyril's heart had been sorely divided and torn since the arrival of the telegram. From that moment till the time of his final departure by train, four hours, he knew, would intervene ; his horse would in a few minutes have taken him to Mary's presence, and so vacillating and unstable are the resolutions of a jealous lover, that there were times when he felt strongly impelled to visit her once again !

Had he done so, how much suffering might in the future have been spared to both ; but the golden moments passed and never returned again.

"To what end or purpose should I go ?" he asked of himself, almost fiercely. "Weakness, folly, disgrace ! No—no ! Once in the train for London, and then all is over !"

Yet his soul was full of compassion and dread for what might

yet be the fate, the future, of this delicate girl, whom he had loved so truly and tenderly.

Cyril was sincerely attached to all the household at Willowdean, to his parents and family, and to none more than his mother, who had ever been, to his eyes, the *belle ideal* of all a lady and a mother ought to be ; yet he was glad, as he had to go, that the telegram and the rail would whisk him off, as he said, "double quick," for the solemnity of leave-taking bored and worried him ; so he shared not his mother's envy of poor Horace's more protracted visit.

He was now anxious only to have it all over and be gone !

After the dark turn his love affair had taken, he felt inclined to thank God for the relief he should find amid the turmoil of war and foreign service with the Fusileers ; he felt a gloomy joy, or grim satisfaction, in the idea that Mary might weep if she saw his name in the Gazette among the killed ; but instantly thrust aside the morbid thought, as he reflected compassionately on his tender mother, and loving father, and all the friends by whom his loss would be lamented ; and life certainly was more valuable than the tears of a false woman !

Already the carriage was at the door ; his luggage, sword, and rugs were placed in it ; he heard the horses' hoofs rasping impatiently among the gravel, as if they resented being harnessed out at such an hour, and the spotted dogs were gambolling about them. Then Cyril's lips quivered, as he drew on his kid gloves with singular but nervous accuracy. His father, brother, and cousin proposed to accompany him to the station ; but he was affectionately peremptory, and would have no second leave-taking.

As his mother cut a parting lock from his thick brown hair, she fairly broke down again, and sobbing, fell upon his neck. By this Sir John, who had his emotions more under control, was greatly moved ; for to see Cyril joining his regiment *now* was so different from what his departure had been on any previous occasion, save on his first appointment, when he was under orders for India.

"Mother darling," whispered Cyril, "when going now, I have but one favour to ask of you ; be kind to that poor girl at Lonewoodlee, should aught happen. I have loved her well ; and for my sake——"

"I shall, Cyril—if I can."

Some hurried salutes, tears, and shaking of hands, a murmured adieu from the assembled servants, and all was over like a dream. He was lying back in the recess of the well-cushioned carriage, and heard the budding branches of the old avenue—budding now as they had done for two hundred springs and more—sweeping its roof as he was driven away.

The old minister, Dr. Squills, with many more, were already

at the railway station to see him finally off, with a farewell cheer ; and as the departing train plunged with a mad shriek into the dark tunnel and vanished, the former lamented aloud that "once again the Merse had lost the best angler that ever dropped a line in the siller Tweed ; the primest curler that ever shot a stone at the rinks ; the boldest rider, the best sportsman, and the lightest dancer in a' the country side ; but God's blessing and a' our gude wishes follow him !"

Until far on in the coming grey dawn, even till the sun rose on land and sea, his mother lay a-bed, sleepless, with watch in hand, reckoning with anxious heart the hours and pauses in his southern journey. Now she knew he must be at Berwick ; now York ; now at Peterborough, and so on, until in fancy she saw the train rushing into the roar and bustle of King's Cross Station.

How long a period might elapse, and how much would he have to undergo, before he traversed that route homeward to her again ?

After a little time poor Mary Lennox heard, and a dreadful shock it gave her, of his abrupt departure on the very night of the sorrowful day when last they met ; and she knew that he had gone without a farewell word or letter of explanation, and that he still thought hardly and strongly, even bitterly, of her, and the girl's heart waxed sore with its great grief.

They could meet no more at the stile by the triple thorn, or under the old pine-trees : and for her own peace she meant in future to shun those places.

Did she repine, even enviously, a little, when Dr. Squills told her incidentally, that Cyril had telegraphed home (and not to her) "of his safe arrival at headquarters ?" We fear she did.

Cyril's new line of conduct seemed so harsh ! Had he wished to quarrel with her, and begun to love his cousin ? It almost seemed so. Well, she had still her poor old father, who clung to her and her only, even as a helpless and querulous child might have done ; but how long should he be spared to her ?

God alone knew.

CHAPTER XXVI.

MARY'S NEW TERROR.

SOME weeks elapsed after this, and yet Mary heard nothing of Cyril ; even the lingering hope that he would write to her died away ; she knew not where his regiment was stationed ; where it was to sail from, when, and for where ; and still full of deep and tender interest, as her heart was for him, this ignorance of

all concerning him was most tantalizing, till one evening she was startled by a sudden visit from Captain Chesters, who had been for some time absent in London ; and with all her horror of him, she hoped to glean in the course of conversation some tidings of the absent and the loved.

The month was April now, but the day had been rainy and gloomy, and Lonewoodlee, with its weather-beaten walls, its masses of dark green ivy and group of stern old pines, had worn its most grim aspect.

The live-long day the rain had been sowing moor and lea, gorging the watercourses and runnels, while masses of cold white vapour were rolling slowly upward from all the lower portions of the pastoral landscape. The desolate face of Nature around the Tower increased the desolation of Mary's heart, for she was at all times an impressionable creature, and the whole of that dreary day she had sat by her father's bed-side sewing, or reading to him, and thinking of Cyril Wedderburn ; where was he—on the land or on the sea—and did he ever think of her now !

On this day it had seemed to Mary that when her father spoke, a strange brightness and smoothing out of wrinkles spread over his withered face ; his brow became stern at times, his eyes sparkled with a new light, and she saw something of what his features must have been in the days of his youth, and in the time of her dead mother's bridal—in the happier years that had gone for ever.

Then as she watched and saw how the brow seemed to become broad and open, the cheek to flush, and a younger appearance to steal over all his face, she trembled in her heart lest the last great crisis and the Shadowy Hand were approaching, for most of the day he had raved of his dead son, and the now almost forgotten Indian war in which he fell. "It is always dreadful even to the accustomed watchers of the sick, when *the mind wanders*," writes the charming authoress of "Lost and Won ;" when the soul goes on some wild journey of his own, away from direct human associations, fighting with imaginary dangers, yearning for impossible delights, living among distorted shadows and amazing pictures that have their origin in some magic-lantern reflection of past and present life." So it was with poor Oliver Lennox. Sometimes he mistook Mary for her mother, who was in the grave ; then came scenes in the hunting-field, for he had been a keen and fearless sportsman, mingled oddly with terror and hatred of duns, and the fancied presence of his dead son Harry, to whom he had been tenderly attached. To these occasional aberrations of intellect, Mary never became used, and they always filled her with the keenest anguish and dismay.

And so for a long and weary day Mary had been enduring all this, till she thought her own brain would turn, when Alison Home announced that Captain Chesters was in the dining-room, where she found him booted and spurred, and warming himself before the large fire of coal, roots, and peat, and perfectly dry, apparently, his overalls and ample Inverness cape, which he had left in the hall, having protected him completely from the rain.

The same old portraits that had looked down on Cyril Wedderburn—portraits of the Lennoxes of past times, "seeming ghostly, desolate, and dread," were looking down on him, but they suggested no other idea to his mind than that they were "uncommonly seedy, and were in appearance only fit for Wardour Street."

Her father was slowly, but surely, passing away, and Mary, in the utter loneliness of her heart—she had so few visitors and fewer friends—now felt compelled (despising herself the while therefore) to receive politely this unwelcome visitor, for, save her father, she knew no human being to care for, or who seemed to care for her; thus a kind of sullen desperation had been stealing over her since Cyril's sudden departure.

Aware that it was Chesters who had injured her with her betrothed, Mary regarded him with a secret fear, equalled only by her loathing, and summoned as she had been from the bedside of her ruined and impoverished parent, whom she knew to be in this man's power, made these emotions all the stronger.

To the *roué* Chesters there was something altogether delightful in the freshness and presence of this young girl, so plainly and modestly attired, and with her rich hair so beautifully dressed, as she came near him, and brought an odour of the dried lavender (from plants in the old garden), amid which all her handkerchiefs, collars, and cuffs were folded; and in her bosom, fastened by her solitary brooch, were some of the first violets of the season, which Alison had gathered for her, singularly enough, near the stile at the old triple thorn.

Mary had not been without many a mortification since Cyril's departure, and since *the story* had gone abroad. Lady Wedderburn, Lady Ernescleugh, and others—even the unpretending Mrs. M'Guffog, the minister's wife—had eyed her coldly and curiously from under their parasols; and some even had ventured to survey her more boldly than had been their wont—or she nervously fancied they did so—and all this she owed to the scheme and tongue of Ralph Rooke Chesters!

And now with the first glance, Mary discerned, to her alarm, that her visitor was, as the saying is, "flushed with wine," or too probably something more potent, as his face was almost purple in some places, his green eyes were bloodshot, and his

utterance was somewhat uncertain. He held out his hand, without drawing his thick riding glove off, and regarded her with one of his cool, leering, and insolent smiles.

"Bravo, Miss Lennox! How goes it with you?" he asked. "Dull enough, I suppose, in this atrocious weather?"

"Pray be seated," said Mary, retreating back a pace, after barely touching his hand.

"Thanks," he replied, continuing to eye her smilingly, and to twirl and untwirl the lash of his short riding whip.

Ignorant of all that passed at Willowdean between Lady Wedderburn and Cyril, or knowing only that the latter was gone, the advent of Gwenny gave Chesters some courage to renew his attempts to gain a place in Mary's heart, or at least to bend her to his purpose; and when tired of her—for tire he knew he should—why, then in Cyril's absence, he might have a chance of winning the heiress, if he met her in London; for Chesters was a man of the most unbounded assurance.

"So Wedderburn is off to join his regiment at last—ha! ha!—after engaging himself to his pretty cousin?" said he, bluntly.

"You are surely misinformed," said Mary, faintly.

"I am *not*. He told me all about it in London."

This, of course, was utterly false; but Mary could not know that it was so, and he was resolved on making her miserable by inspiring her with jealousy and mistrust.

"And where is his regiment lying at present?" she asked.

"Tisn't lying anywhere just now," he replied, in a mocking tone, which, like his smile, was replete with insolence.

"I do not understand you, sir," said Mary.

"You're dying to know all about it, though. Well, after our mutual friend Wedderburn had been going it, as usual, among the girls at Chatham and Rochester—oh, I know the style perfectly—the Fusileers sailed from Southampton on the fifth of this month."

"For where?" asked Mary, in a low, breathless voice.

"Oh, Malta, Turkey, or somewhere thereabout. What can it matter to you now? Come, Miss Lennox—or may I not call you Mary?"

"See the mountains kiss high Heaven,
And the waves clasp one another."

And he proceeded to quote again his favourite and almost only piece of poetry, drawing nearer her as he did so; but Mary arose, with lips compressed and eyes flashing, and so Chesters, whose ideas of love-making had not been acquired in the society of ladies generally, became correspondingly irritated.

"Well, if you won't be jolly, but are determined to be

unpleasant," said he, with an insolent laugh, "suppose we talk about business?"

"I am more and more at a loss to understand you, sir."

"You can understand *this*, I presume, Miss Lennox, that I took up the old gentleman's bill—not for his own sake, but yours?"

"Though you have been so often his guest in better days? Yet, from whatever motive you freed my poor papa from the terror of it, you performed an act of great kindness and charity, for which I shall ever thank you and remember you in my prayers."

"Bah!" said he, with gloomy scorn, "who prays nowadays? You treat me more like a dog than a gentleman, Miss Lennox; but," he added, as the fumes of what he had taken were beginning to mount upward, "do you know that for all the grand airs you give yourself, I could have your father arrested and marched off to Greenlaw Gaol; and if you continue as obdurate as you are now, what the devil is to hinder me from doing so?"

Terror of the man, and of his new and unwonted bearing, got the better of Mary's anger, and compelled her to dissemble. But she said—

"You talk daringly, sir; for what reason could you, or any such as you, have Oliver Lennox of Lonewoodlee arrested?"

"Debt. Have you already forgotten the bill I took up for him?"

"Never shall I forget your kindness. But has not the bill expired? I think the phrase is."

"No; it can never expire. I had it protested and renewed; so it grows daily in value—interest upon interest. The world is divided into two classes—at least, I have found it so—fools and scoundrels, or dupes and despots. Now, by Jove! I prefer being the last named; anything is better than being a fool or a dupe."

Mary was speechless. The bill! that fatal bill! She remembered how she had bathed her father's trembling hand in Rimmel and iced water, before he had achieved the signing and indorsation of it, with a signature so all unlike what his own was wont to be, that the bank people had eyed it dubiously for a time.

"How did your father ever expect to meet this bill, unless some good-natured fellow like myself had come forward? He is a veritable old goose, who seems to have thought his pasture land of Lonewoodlee a perfect California, a Golconda, or El Dorado, that no end of money could be got out of."

"And what have you thought of Chesterhaugh?" retorted Mary.

"Pretty much the same, by Jove! But though Chesterhaugh

is entailed, I have contrived to make all the timber march, and something more."

Amid all the difficulties, monetary and otherwise, that Mary had undergone, no man had ever before dared to address her in the tone and manner now adopted by this bold reprobate. A clamorous anxiety, a strong sense of weary confusion, a terrible, yet dull oppression of the heart and aching of the head, a sensation as if she was all pulse, pervaded her. She made a struggle to appear calm, and only after a time became conscious that Chesters was speaking again, but with thicker utterances than ever.

"Give me one kiss, Mary dear, and a promise of a little hope that you will love me in the time to come, and I shall be patient, though I want money horribly. Once I had only to draw upon my banker, now I have to draw upon my wits—a devil of a difference, you'll admit. So just one kiss, my sweet——"

"Stand back, sir, I command you!" exclaimed Mary, raising her hand to the bell.

"Why, hang it! you don't mean to mourn for ever about that selfish muf, Wedderburn, who has discarded you—cast you off for a richer engagement?"

"He could not well have made a poorer one," sighed Mary.

"Had he been a man of honour, he would never have concealed from his family the fact that he loved you."

This was perhaps the most stinging remark Chesters had made, and having some truth in it, Mary felt it more keenly; so if fear made her tolerate the presence of Chesters, wounded pride now caused her to loathe him more and more. Remembering all the trickery of which Cyril—her absent Cyril—had suspected him, hinting even at intended murder, perhaps; his sharpening at cards, and the apparent snare into which he had lured herself, indignation for a moment got the better of her fear and policy, and with invincible hauteur in her face and manner, she said—

"I have to request, sir, that you never again mention the name of Captain Wedderburn to me. Indeed, I am astonished that you dare to speak of him to any one."

"Why? by Jove!"

"When you know that his horse was drugged on that terrible night."

"By whom?" he asked, with a frown.

"Your worthy groom, or yourself."

"Dare you say so to me—a gentleman?" he asked, making a stride towards her, and laying a hand heavily on her arm.

"I do. A gentleman? Take your hand away, Captain Chesters, or, though a girl, I shall——"

"Do what?"

"Summon aid, and have you expelled," replied Mary, feeling again all her own helplessness.

Her words and bearing had, however, the effect of completely sobering her tormentor, who took up his hat, and, while a cruel white glitter came into his green eyes, said, with a mocking bow, "As you please, Mary Lennox; as you please. But I warn you, that if you are not more complaisant when next we meet, my protested bill shall go into the hands of Grubb and Wylie, my solicitors. If you have no mercy on me, why the deuce should I have any on your father? And so I wish you good evening."

Mary made no reply to the unmanly threat of this would-be lover; but turned her back upon him and rang the bell, that Alison might usher him out. And as the sound of his horse's hoofs died away in the rain that lashed the windows, she felt as if her heart was dying within her, for never before had she undergone an interview so singular and insulting; and she felt, moreover, an intuitive foreboding that she had not seen the last of Rooke Chesters. "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof," saith the old Scriptural proverb. But she could not help dreading evil and gloom, misery and desperation, beyond the present; and that Chesters might, in his baffled rage at herself, be infamous enough to attempt to arrest her father, place him in prison, and so kill him outright, came on her soul like a new and hitherto unforeseen terror.

But strange events were to happen ere Mary and her tormentor met again. And after a few weeks she learned incidentally, from Dr. Squills, that Chesters had left the neighbourhood once more, and betaken himself to London. All that remained of Chesterhaugh, being entailed, had been put under trust for the behoof of his long-patient creditors; the house and grounds were advertised to be let by Messrs. Grubb and Wylie; so Mary and the district were alike freed from the annoyance of his presence for a time.

But she found her home gradually growing more and more intolerable to her. Cyril's sudden and unwonted visit just before his departure, and her subsequent anxiety for letters which never came, all betokened some mystery. Her rather stormy interview with Chesters, overheard, doubtless, by vulgar ears that were at the keyhole, and the total cessation of his visits afterwards; together with the great local *esclandre* of the snowy night at Chesterhaugh, had been made subjects for discussion at the village tap, the blacksmith's forge, and even beside her own kitchen-hearth.

Mary could gather much of this from the manner of Alison Home and her other domestic; and they had seen much that Mary wist not of, for, like all their class, they could read the

faces of their superiors as one may read a book ; and in hers they saw only trouble and sorrow, distraction and care.

She felt that Cyril had deserted her, and she would say in her heart—

“His love for me was but one thought, one fancy, it may be, among many ; while mine, alas ! it was the die on which I staked my all—the chain whereon all the links of my life were strung.”

CHAPTER XXVII.

IN BARRACKS AGAIN.

“As I informed you by telegraph, Wedderburn, we embark on the 5th—so you have a fortnight to get your outfit for the East, to see all your old flames in Rochester and Brompton, to practise the use of the revolver at the Spur Battery, and every other little art of war or peace that may be turned to useful account in the land for which we are bound.”

It was Sir Edward Elton, the Lieutenant-Colonel of the Fusileers, who spoke laughingly to Cyril, when the latter in uniform, with sword and sash on, reported himself in due form at Chatham Barracks, as having joined from leave, three days after his departure from Willowdean.

In the prime of life and manhood, Sir Edward looked every inch a soldier. Fully six feet in height, his strong and lithe figure had endured, without being impaired, the snows of Canada and the fierce hot sun of India : but his coal-black hair was becoming grizzled now. His dark hazel eyes were keen, but calm and resolute in expression, as those of one born to command ; and his voice was full, deep, and rolling, though apt to become husky after he had “handled” the regiment throughout a long field-day on the Lines or elsewhere. He was the beau ideal of what a British officer and a thorough English gentleman ought to be ; and had seen some sharp service in the East Indies, when with Pollock's Brigade in Afghanistan. He was thrice wounded on the banks of the Sutledge, and was nearly finished off by a thrust from a Sikh lance at the battle of Aliwal.

“You'll find all our fellows pretty much the same as you left them,” he resumed ; “Probyn as keen at billiards as ever ; Bingham always in a scrape with some enterprising maid, wife, or widow ; Pat Beamish always late for parade, breakfasting on seltzer and curaçoa, with a wet towel round his head, and the major giving, as usual, his song of ‘The girl I left behind me,’ to the last few who linger at the mess-table.”

“He may sing that song with full effect, ere long,” replied

Cyril, laughing at the Colonel's enumeration of a few regimental peculiarities.

"We shall have work enough and to spare in getting all ready by the 5th of the month; the baggage must be reduced to the smallest possible compass, and all we don't require, must be left, like the poor women and children, with the *dépôt*. I am glad to say that the regiment is in the highest order and discipline, and able, thank God! to face more than its own strength of any troops in the world."

Elton's eye kindled as he spoke, for he was intensely proud of his regiment, the noblest qualities of which he had carefully fostered and developed; and perhaps no finer body than these Royal Fusileers existed in the service of the Queen, being all picked men, and in their ranks the three countries of the Empire were pretty equally represented; if there was any preponderance it was in favour of England, and among them were more "Good-conduct-ring men," than almost any other corps could produce.

"I shall see you this evening at mess, I presume. This is our last night there; to-morrow it is to be broken up. There is no parade this afternoon, save for the juniors and recruits; so I would advise you to fill up a spare hour in going over the company's accounts and so forth."

And, as the Colonel concluded, he once more turned to the "Register of Services," one of the thirteen great books which are kept in every regiment of Infantry.

Cyril shook his hand, quitted the orderly room, and once more found himself in the sunlighted barrack square, where squads of recruits are for ever marching to and fro, with or without rifles, practising the balance-step, or swinging the clubs or the dumb-bells, and mechanically he took his way to his old rooms, on the tree-shaded and somewhat gloomy old brick terrace which overlooks the parade-ground.

Though his quarters as a captain—one small apartment and a still smaller bed closet, their walls covered with mean and dingy paper of the cheapest material—were quite familiar to him, their poverty of aspect, the small and coarsely-glazed window that faced the blank brick wall enclosing St. Mary's Hospital, the lowness of the ceiling, the ugly wooden beam which crossed it and was covered with ten thousand indentations made with a poker (the usual mode then of summoning one's servant from his den above) together with the meagre and rickety furniture obtained on hire from some exorbitant Jew, all impressed him unfavourably, fresh as he was from the luxury and splendour of his own home at Willowdean.

He tossed his sword and crimson sash on the table with a sigh, and opened his blue surtout with its gold shoulderscales—the most handsome undress ever worn by the Line—as if he was choking from want of air.

Was it not a dream that since he had last stood there, matters were so changed between him and Mary Lennox ; that he had indeed lost her, and should never hear again the voice that found so soft an echo in his heart ?

He had received no explanation from her of that obnoxious episode, the visit to Chesterhaugh ; he had asked none, nor, perhaps, would he have listened to any in the mood of mind he was then. Yet he was not without a lingering hope that she *might* write to him in some fashion ; and so the craving to hear from her, or of her, combated fiercely with the sterner resolve to pluck from his heart the memory of her image, and all that she had been. It was so difficult—so bitter a conviction to entertain, that all was indeed over between him and Mary Lennox ! But he had never told her where his regiment lay, a singular omission, and in her sequestered home among the Lammermuirs, she knew none who could inform her, even if her little pride of heart would have permitted her to write. She, like him, longed and looked for letters ; but did so in vain. None were exchanged, so disappointment and mistrust grew fast between these two, who had hitherto loved so tenderly.

While in this mood of mind, Cyril Wedderburn had no desire for the tame monotony of overhauling his pay-sergeant's books, and seeing that Private Jones had been duly credited or debited the sum of ninepence ; that Private Brown's stoppage repaid the expense of the shako and ball-tuft he had lost in a row on St. Patrick's day ; that Private Smith's clearances had been paid to his wife when her last baby was born, and *not* to the clamorous canteen-keeper ; and that all the messing, clothing, and accoutrements of ninety odd non-commissioned officers and men, were right and regular.

But as idleness was impossible, he took his new-bought revolver-pistols, and went forth to the Spur Battery to practise in the dry ditch, at sundry imaginary Russians. Even of that he wearied, for in the ditch were already some thirty or forty noisy, happy, and heedless subalterns—boys fresh from Sandhurst or Eton, and chiefly ensigns of the Provisional Battalion, all cracking away to each other's peril with their revolvers, and emulous in their pistol practice ; and so, while numbers of his brother officers, with whom he was an especial favourite, were searching for him at his quarters, the mess-room, and all about the barracks, he was leaning over the lofty summit of the glacis, gazing dreamily at the old familiar scene, which spread far down below him like a map.

He saw the fertile plains of Kent, steeped in the light of the noon-day sun, stretching far away till lost in hazy distance ; the village of Rainham, and all the windmills that studded the green slopes ; the sleepy Medway with all its man-o'-war hulks

and freight of lesser craft, winding between its banks ; bustling Chatham, its streets full of red-coats ; the great square stone block of Rochester Castle, and the tower of the Cathedral, both rising from amid a sea of sunny vapour, half in light and half in sombre shadow ; and immediately beneath the lofty bastion was the gloomier feature of the scene—the Military Cemetery, where lie the bones of a vast army—of the thousands who have escaped the battle and the pest, in every clime where our drums have beaten, and who have come home invalided at last, worn out by wounds and with constitutions broken, only to die in Fort Pitt, and fated neither to see home or kind, or to enjoy the hard-won pittance named in mockery a pension, but to find an obscure grave under the brow of the great Spur Battery.

Cyril looked long and thoughtfully over this scene so familiar to his eyes, while those sounds so incessant in the adjacent streets of barrack, the drum, the bugle, and often the shrill Scottish pipe, were perpetually ringing in air, announcing orders, parades, or dinners, and so forth ; and he marvelled in his heart how he and all those in whom he had an interest, and for whom he had a love, might be situated, ere that day twelve-months came round ; for now war had been declared, and the sword was drawn ; already the combined fleets of France and Britain lay before the Russian harbour of Odessa, and none knew what an hour might bring forth.

CHATTER XXVIII.

THE LAST NIGHT AT MESS.

“WELCOME back, Wedderburn ! Eastward Ho ! is now the *cri de guerre* !” exclaimed the cheerful voice of Probyn—always known as Jack Probyn—when Cyril entered the mess-room of the Fusileers, just as the last notes of the fife and drum, playing the “Roast Beef of Old England,” died away on the Terrace without, and most of his brother officers accorded him a hearty reception as he passed along to his place. It was flattering to find that he was so much a favourite, and on his mind there flashed the thought, could Mary but have seen it !

It was the last day of the Regimental Mess—for the morrow was to see it broken up, and those who had met together at the same board so long and so happily, dining as best they might in their own quarters or at hotels. Thus it was not without something of melancholy interest, for the casualties of war had to be encountered before once again those silver trophies glittered on the table ; and of all the happy, heedless, and handsome young

fellows who sat there now, who might be present at the next festal meeting? How many might be under a foreign sod, or mutilated and pining forgotten, upon half-pay.

God alone could tell. Soldiers are not much given to reflection luckily, and probably few thought on the subject.

The mess-room was far from being an elegant one, for in Chatham Barracks even moderate comfort cannot be found; then how much less, elegance! It was long, narrow, and somewhat low in the ceiling. Dingy red curtains draped the windows, and a few oil portraits decorated the walls. These were the property of the regiment, being likenesses of some of its colonels who had either been favourites with the Fusileers of past times, or were eminent in military history, such as George Lord Dartmouth, who demolished Tangiers, and whose breast-plate and black wig belonged to the days of the Revolution; the Great Earl of Orkney, who commanded the corps at Steinkirk and the Siege of Athlone, and whose squinting Countess was the mistress of him of "the pious, glorious, and immortal memory." And there was fiery little Lord Tyrawley, in whose days, when the regiment was hunting Rob Roy in the Highlands, it was named the South British Fusileers to distinguish it from the 21st, who still retain their remarkably ugly cognomen of North British Fusileers.

The furniture was very plain; at one end stood a table covered by a red cloth, whereon lay the current literature of the mess, to wit: Army Lists, Racing Calendars, Peerages, the "Queen's Regulations," "Field Exercise for the Infantry," and various newspapers, the corners of which had been appropriated for lighting cigars when matches ran short; but what the room itself lacked in elegance, was amply made up for by the splendour of the long table, on each side of which sat some thirty officers all in full uniform, richly laced, with crimson sashes and glittering epaulettes, for in those days the free and easy mode of dining in shell-jackets and open vests, had not as yet crept into the service.

They were all men of a good style and more than creditable appearance; there was not a sub in the regiment, and very few of the captains, but could ride, row, shoot or fence, handle a cricket-bat, a billiard-cue, or single-stick with any man; and, as the old commandant said, at the farewell inspection, "They were a splendid set of officers, and such as England only could produce."

The mess-plate, the long accumulation of years, was indeed magnificent; and on the tall centre-piece, the chased epergnes, the massive goblets and salvers, large as shields, were graven the trophies and mottoes of the Fusileers—the Rose of England, the Garter and the Crown, with all their battles from the

capture of Martinique to the field of Toulouse. Nor were softer luxuries omitted ; on this, the last day, the mess-man had done his best, and thus roses, carnations, and geraniums from neighbouring conservatories were not wanting to enhance the decorations of the table ; and the ice to cool the champagne was cut in square blocks of crystalline brightness, hollowed out to receive the bottles, when placed in the costlier coolers of gold and silver, carved and embossed.

The colonel, Sir Edward Elton, was in the chair ; Pomfret, the junior Lieutenant present—the corps had then *no* Ensigns—was Vice-President. The former wore his Cross of the Bath, and save a few who had Indian medals, he was the only man decorated there ; for the veterans of Walcheren and Egypt, the Peninsula and Waterloo, had long since become as traditions in the ranks.

Ten liveried servants, whose close shorn hair and stiffness of bearing showed them to be soldiers, were in attendance, and amid the buzz of conversation, half-drowned by the crash of the band playing certain airs from *Lucrezia* and *Fidelio* on the Terrace outside, Cyril heard dreamily the voices with which he had been so long familiar ; of his kindest friend, Major Singleton, an old soldier who had suffered many disappointments in his time (as what old soldier has not ?) and who, having little save his pay, would have retired but that war had broken out ; of Jack Probyn, arguing with the Doctor about a billiard match ; Pat Beamish, with his rich Irish brogue, quizzing Bingham, Captain of the first company, about some girl with whom he had been flirting furiously about three o'clock that morning ; and all the frivolous chatter and banter inseparable from the conversation of thoughtless young men who meet thrice daily at least—once at dinner and twice on parade.

But now after Cyril had related the story of his adventure with the horse, very briefly, for a rumour of it had reached the regiment, the usual light topics became diversified by others of a graver nature ; the crowded state of the garrison ; the preparations for war by land and sea ; the chances of promotion and staff appointments ; which regiment had sailed already, and what other corps were going ; was Odessa to be the base of operations, or some port in the Black Sea ? Bets were taken in favour of Odessa, and lost in the end. The merits of the general officers, the probable formation of the brigades and divisions, and the supposed plans of the campaign, were all discussed pell-mell with the beauty of certain dancers and opera singers, the points of dogs and horses, quarrels and grievances, and the girls at the Rochester Balls, where the same set of pretty faces appeared weekly, and as Beamish said, "regularly tore one's epaulettes to rags by the vigour with which they held on while waltzing."

"I'll trouble you for a slice of that turkey, Wedderburn," said Probyn.

"With pleasure, old fellow," replied Cyril, starting from his waking dream; "a little of the stuffing?"

"Thanks—did you see this morning's Gazette?"

"No—anything important?"

"Only the names of a few fellows who are appointed to serve on the staff of the proposed Turkish Contingent."

"Any one we know?" asked Major Singleton.

"Bedad," struck in Beamish, with a flash in his dark blue Irish eyes, "there's a fellow going out with the rank of major that is as big a blackguard as ever was drummed out of the Belem Rangers."

"Rather strong language, Beamish!" said Sir Edward Elton, with a smile, but a tone of reproof.

"Not a bit too strong for the occasion, Colonel," urged Beamish.

"Is it Ralph Rooke Chesters you mean?" asked Probyn.

"The same," resumed Beamish, while Cyril felt his heart throb painfully; "he was once in a Lancer corps, but proved a mighty deal too sharp for the mess at cards, and so had to sell out to avoid a court-martial; and now here is the fellow going to the East with the rank of major, bad luck to him!"

"That comes of having swell friends at head-quarters," said Probyn.

"But it is only local rank," added some one despairingly.

"True for you," grumbled Pat, dragging at his big black whiskers; "but it is rank there anyhow, and it is small pleasure I'd have in taking orders from Rooke Chesters on an outlying picket, or in front of the enemy—Champagne, waiter! By-the-by, Wedderburn, you'll have to call out Pomfret."

"Why, what has poor Pomfret been doing?" asked Cyril, looking at the smiling and rosy cheeked subaltern, who was fresh from Sandhurst.

"Doing? By Jove, he's been going ahead at an awful pace at the bandstand and the Rochester Balls with an old flame of yours, Miss——"

"Exactly—I know," said Cyril, nervously interrupting the name.

"The Canterbury girl who worked you an elegant cigar case."

"Pomfret is welcome," said Cyril, wearily, for the name of Chesters had put a finishing stroke upon his secret annoyance. In spite of the light-heartedness of those about him and the all-inspiring subject of the coming war, Cyril felt low in spirits, dissatisfied and unhappy, and the more champagne he imbibed, the more dull he seemed to become.

His old friend Singleton observed this ; but instead of rallying him as he might have done, he said in a low voice—

"You seemed livelier before you left us on leave, Wedderburn—pardon me, but what is wrong with you ?"

"Can't say, Major—but I do feel out of sorts."

"Out of spirits, rather——no little bit of white muslin in the matter, is there ? Hah ! I am right—that glitter and half closing of the eye—and the sudden pink in the cheek, tell me all about it. Well—if you have no engagement to-night, come to my quarters after the mess breaks up, and we shall have a little friendly chat over a quiet glass of grog and a devilled bone. Are you game for that ?"

"Thanks—I am at your service, Singleton."

"Never think of annoyances, or run after them," said Beamish. "Cyril, like creditors, duns, and the devil, by the Powers, they'll find you out soon enough !"

"Going to the ball to-night, Beamish ?" lisped Meredyth Pomfret, the junior lieutenant, save Ramornie.

"Where is the ball, my little man ?"

"At the Dockyard Superintendent's. The whole of the staff, a swell set, will be there—some pretty girls, too, Beamish."

"And could I venture among that lot in white muslin and tulle—I, an unprotected man ?" replied Beamish, who was a black whiskered and square shouldered Irishman, with a deep Kerry brogue ; "and on the eve of marching for foreign service too, would it be fair to break any more of the darlings' hearts ? No—no ; that cruelty I leave to such fellows as you, Pomfret and Wedderburn."

"Foreign service—and so it has come to that again !" said a married officer who was the Colonel's guest, and there was a tinge of thoughtful regret in his tone.

"Well, Joyce, bedad it's a power sight better than being camped at the Curragh of Kildare, or protecting Peelers and process-servers in Tipperary, or hunting for whiskey stills (God bless them !) in the Bog of Allen, when the mist lies thick on the Slievebloom Mountains."

On this day Cyril had some food afforded him for speculating or reflecting, if not on human affairs in general, on the mutability of human love in particular. When returning from the Spur Battery in the afternoon, he had passed a handsome carriage bowling on the way past St. Mary's guard-house, towards the green Lines and the beautiful village of Gillingham. A pretty brunette in a white crape bonnet peeped forth for an instant. Cyril would remember—oh, how well !—the time when the sight of that equipage, its horses, harness, and livery, had made his heart leap, and now he barely accorded to its occupant a salute with his forage-cap. Yet he could recall

vows that seemed now to have been traced in water or written on sand, and the flood of joy her smile once poured through his heart had subsided for ever ! How the thought of her had been the first in the morning and the last in the night ! How many an hour had he rambled and ridden, danced and lingered with her ; and how often had he met her amid the woods of Cobham, the green leafy lanes of Gillingham and Rainham ! How he had showered gloves, bouquets, music, and gifts more precious still upon her ; loving her and clinging to her, though he knew that before this Hamilton of the Scots Royals, Musgrave of the Marines, and Sutton of the Artillery, had flirted with her, and carried on the same agreeable but perilous game ! Yet he hoped that she loved really at last, and loved *him* better than any one ; but the quizzing of the mess had saved him. She was beautiful, yet she had been talked of then in his hearing as "a knowing hand—an old stager—up to trap," and so on ; and the warning drum, when it beat for the march after the *route* came, dissolved the spell, so others had succeeded him, and now it was on "Pomfret of ours." His idol had taken to bird-liming the unfledged ensigns and second-lieutenants ; and she, so loved and petted by him once, was less even than a friend now—a mere bowing acquaintance. How strange to think it was so, after all that had been !

How often is much of this great game of life played out *unseen*, amid a crowded drawing-room, at the jovial dinner-table, at the social fireside, by hearts that seem to break, "yet breakingly live on," while sentiment wars and struggles in vain, for in the end time soothes all things !

How much, how dear, how close to his soul was that woman once ! Alas, how little now—less, we have said, than a bowing acquaintance !

Would his love for Mary Lennox share a similar fate ? Perhaps so—time alone could show.

As this was the last night of the mess, until long after the drums had beaten tattoo in the great echoing square ; long after the subalterns of the day had collected the final reports of the present, the absent, and the tipsy ; the last bugle had warned "lights and fires out," and silence and darkness gathered over the roofs where so many thousand soldiers were sleeping, that so long were to be in the tented field, the officers of the Fusileers and a few of their guests lingered at table as if loth to separate ; but ultimately, leaving a few who were bent on "making a night of it," or a morning rather, Cyril and Beamish adjourned to the quarters of Major Singleton, to have a little quiet supper, the "devilled bone," &c., which had already preceded them from the mess-house.

CHAPTER XXIX.

CONFIDENCES.

"BOTHER this garrison order about 'lights and fires out' by tattoo ! here's my fellow actually extinguished the stair-lamp," said the Major, as they stumbled up the old wooden staircase which led to his quarters. "Where are you, Beamish ?"

"Behind you, in the dark, Major—in the dark, bedad, like a Protestant Bishop, as we say in Kerry."

Singleton soon found the keys of his rooms at the back of the staircase window-shutter, the place where such are frequently deposited in Chatham and other barracks, and they soon found themselves in his quarters, where, by the application of the poker to the dormant beam above, he summoned his servant down.

"Now then, Bob, look alive, and let us have supper double quick !"

Bob Dacres had relinquished his white livery coat and aiguillette on leaving the mess ; but he still retained his yellow plush inexpressibles, white stockings, and buckled shoes. They consorted oddly with an old regimental coat, having white worsted wings—a garment which he had donned for kitchen-work.

The fire was stirred up in the small, meagre grate furnished by her Majesty's Ordnance Department ; four candles were lighted, two on the table where the supper was laid, and two more stuck in quart bottles on the mantelpiece, gave the Major's sitting-room a cheerful aspect, though it was minus carpet or curtains, and its furniture was of the plainest description, being the mere barrack allowance ; to wit, a couple of Windsor chairs of hard wood, a table of the same material, a set of fire-irons, a cast-metal coal-box, with three field-pieces engraven thereon between the letters V.R. and B.O. ; a pair of bellows, and a black iron candlestick. These elegant pieces of furniture, together with a few iron-bound baggage trunks that had been all round the world, completed the comforts and appurtenances of the Major's room, unless we add a couple of regulation swords and undress and dress belts with a double-barrelled gun and brace of horse-pistols that hung in a corner, and a wooden box of cigars that stood on the mantelshef, "pro bono publico," as he said, for Conyers Singleton was a plain soldier of the old school, contenting himself with little, and always resolved to make the most and best of everything. He rarely or never wore "mufti," and when he did it was quite out of the mode.

He had a grave, almost sad face at times, with a remarkably soft expression of eye ; and it was currently supposed in the regiment that a shadow or a sorrow must have rested on some portion of his earlier life ; at least, all knew that prior to his joining the Fusileers he had been long a prisoner of war in India, and had thereby lost his chances of promotion. "There is no example of human beauty more perfectly picturesque than a very handsome man of middle age—not even the same man when in his youth," according to one of our fair novelists : and these words fully applied to the Major, who, though past the prime of life, was still a man of fine and commanding appearance. His features were noble, and slightly aquiline, and his thick, wavy hair, once a rich dark brown, was fast becoming grey and grizzled now ; but his hazel eyes were as clear and bright as when a boy ensign he carried the colours of his regiment fearlessly up the corpse-strewn glaciis of Ghuznee, though seven reliefs had been shot under them in succession.

He had seen much service in other corps, but was an especial favourite with the Fusileers.

The supper, which consisted of something better than the promised "devilled bone," was soon discussed ; the Major's servant was dismissed to his roost upstairs, and amid a cloud of soothing Cavendish, the trio proceeded to make themselves completely comfortable.

"This is jolly !" exclaimed Beamish, as he tossed aside his sash, and threw open his full-dress uniform.

"I have wine, if you fellows prefer it," said Singleton ; "but here are brandy and some real Irish whiskey ; and neither will taste the worse for being in black bottles."

"The whiskey, by all means, with water *pur et simple*," said Beamish, "and no adulteration of lemon or sugar—orthodox grog, that is the mark, Major, for there's never a headache in a hogshcad of it. Ah," continued Pat, while mixing his tumbler and eyeing the contents affectionately, "there is nothing on earth so true as a good glass of grog—nothing so fickle as a pretty woman !"

"Heresy !" said the Major, while Beamish heaved a mock sigh, and Cyril remained silent.

"I saw Miss—Miss What's-her-name !—you know it well enough, Wedderburn—passing in her carriage by St. Mary's Guard to the Lines to-day," resumed Beamish.

"And young Pomfret, no doubt, with her ?" added Singleton. "A little fool that boy is !"

"She still looks young and beautiful, that brunette, though I have known her when younger and more beautiful ; but that was before we went to Burmah ; and, by Jove, 'tisn't yesterday I saw the big pagoda of Moulmein."

"It seems ages ago, and she's on the cards still!"

Cyril's heart beat quicker, and he coloured while he spoke, yet he scarcely knew with what emotion, as he had long ceased to care for the fair one in question.

"Don't affect to be soured with the sex, Pat," said Singleton. "Fill your glass again—it's down to zero."

"Soured! not I; for I am naturally kind and attentive to everything with a petticoat on."

"Even a Scotch Highlander, eh?"

"But we had one omission to-night at mess, Singleton."

"What was it?"

"Your invariable song, 'The girl I left behind me.' It generally comes off about one in the morning."

"But we left at twelve sharp, and I am keeping it for the marching-out day," replied the Major; and with a twinkle in his eyes, which were fixed on Cyril, Beamish began to sing in a mock sentimental manner—

"My love is fair as Shannon's side,
And purer than its water;
But she refused to be my bride,
Though many a year I sought her.
Yet since to France I marched away,
Her letters oft remind me,
That I promised never to betray
The girl I left behind me."

"Well, Beamish," said Singleton, catching something of the other's spirit of raillery, "I hadn't the heart to sing when I saw Wedderburn looking so melancholy."

"What is amiss, Cyril? Have you made a bad book on the Epsom, or the Whittlebury Stakes for three-years-olds? Or is it some red-headed Scotch lass that you have left behind you?"

Cyril's eyes dilated and flashed; and he coloured with vexation, but attempted to laugh while rising the glass to his lips.

"You seem awfully cut up about something, and it must be a girl, Wedderburn," said the Major. "I can see that with half an eye."

Cyril's colour deepened; he was in no humour either for scrutiny or banter. But Beamish said laughingly—

"Don't grieve so about it, or her, or whatever it is. Little more than a week must find us on the sea, and if a girl has jilted you, forget all about it, or score it down to the bad drop that is in her, as we say in Ireland."

He winced decidedly under this unwitting home-thrust, but drained a huge rummer of brandy-and-water at a gulp, and then with a sudden burst of that communicativeness which seizes most men at times, and of which they generally repent when calm reflection comes in the morning, he exclaimed—

"I have been deceived, Singleton—deceived where I trusted; I own it, and am sick and sore at heart just now!"

"Hear that now. Bedad! I would have sworn it!" said Beamish, in whose eyes there shone a light that was all merriment, without an atom of the commiseration for which Cyril was inclined to look.

"I have been deluded, I say, Singleton, by a girl I loved well and dearly," he resumed, with growing bitterness; "and in my heart I am constantly vowing—yes, swearing that I shall forget her; but with every futile vow her gentle face, her soft voice, and all her image—the remembered charm of her presence—come back to me clearer and more vividly than ever! Oh, what magic, what idiosyncrasy of the human heart is this!"

"By Jove! it's like a bit of Moore's melodies!" said Beamish, while Cyril coloured deeper, with a sudden sense of his rashness in making such an admission.

"You are just what I was at your age, when a subaltern, though, luckier than I, you are now a captain," said Singleton. "I was hot-headed, generous, impulsive, and warm-hearted. Ah, what a devil of a treadmill is this work-a-day world, that it grinds both heart and soul out of us till nearly all trust in man, and too often in woman too, passes away with every scrape of our razor! How many fellows have I seen come into the service since I was first gazetted—cultivate their whiskers, and the d—d Jews!—get into debt or matrimony, sell out or go to the devil, while I have still held on, and am only a major yet, when so many of my brother-subalterns are in command of regiments, or the enjoyment of snug staff appointments!"

"But you had a singular run of ill-luck," urged Cyril—"your captivity."

"True; few, however, but myself, know exactly all that captivity cost me; and now, if you have patience to listen to an old soldier's story, I don't care if I should spend a few minutes in telling you the incidents that cast a shadow on my life for many a year—a shadow that may never pass away or melt into sunshine."

The Major paused, and after a time said—

"It is a strange, but pretty true axiom, that 'a man is only as old as he feels; a woman as old as she looks;' thus I am not so old as to be past loving, or at least remembering what it was to love and be loved in return. So listen to my story."

And filling his glass and his meerschaum almost at the same time, Conyers Singleton related the following little narrative of his early life.

CHAPTER XXX.

"THE GIRL I LEFT BEHIND ME."

"THERE was a time when hope and enthusiasm were the mainsprings of life and action with me. Alas! their places are supplied alone by memory now. No battle in the field has ever been fought without some blunder; then how much more likely is the battle of life to be full of error and mischance!

"In the year after the storming of Ghuznee, in Afghanistan (when both of you who now listen to me must have been boys at school), I found myself at home in Cheshire on sick-leave. I had been wounded by an Afghan lance, and was in comparatively feeble health; so as our way to and from India then was always round the Cape, my leave was for two years from the date of leaving head-quarters, and I was bent on enjoying it all the more that I had come home on promotion; for my corps, the **th, had been sorely cut up during Keane's operations amid the snowy mountains and deep and perilous defiles of Afghanistan. We lost by war and disease nearly all our captains, so we, the subalterns, benefited thereby.

"My aunt, Lady Singleton (dowager to Sir Guy Singleton, a general of the old fighting days of Wellington), received me with open arms, for I was almost the only relation she possessed, and at her old place, Stoketon Moat, near Warrington, but on the Cheshire side of the Mersey, I had always found a warm welcome when I came there for school holidays in the years of my orphanage (my parents having died young), then how much more welcome was I from far away India, and the perils of the Afghan war!

"Stoketon Moat—so called, for once in Saxon times a timber house had stood there surrounded by a moat, of which not a trace can now be found, though it was said to be deep enough when Hugh d'Avranches, after Hastings, slew the whole Saxon inmates of the place, sparing not even the dogs by the hearth—was a beautiful old mansion of the later Tudor days, with heavily mullioned windows that were half-shrouded in ivy, jasmine, and clematis, through the leafy masses of which the sun at times could scarcely penetrate the little leaded hexagonal panes, the upper rows whereof were emblazoned with the armorial bearings of the Singletons for many a generation, back even to Geoffrey Singleton, one of the two knights who represented Cheshire in Parliament in the reign of Henry VIII., who curtailed so greatly the absurd privileges of the county-palatine of Chester.

"The old house stood on an eminence overlooking the sweep made by the Mersey towards Runcorn: it was surrounded

by fine old oaks, massive cedars, and dark yews, and the vista through these, as seen from its front, was terminated by the green hill that is crowned by the old ruined castle of Halton.

"Aunt Singleton was of a cheerful disposition, thus Stoketon Moat was seldom without visitors; and on this occasion she had residing with her three handsome and lovely girls, the youngest seventeen, the oldest barely twenty, whose presence spread a new and bright charm to me about the quaint old house.

"Isabel, Lyla, and Katie Vane, were unusually attractive girls; their beauty was great and of the most refined and delicate cast; but the eldest proved the most charming to me. She was twenty now, and I had not seen her for four years before, when an incipient boyish and girlish flirtation had sprung up between us—a flirtation that with our somewhat maturer years was to take a more solid and lasting form amid the seclusion of Stoketon Moat, and the opportunities afforded by its woods and fields, green lanes, and leafy privacy.

"I was an object of interest now, to be flattered, coddled, and petted—pale, and with my recent wound yet green, and yet with all the glories of Keane's campaign to talk about!

"Thus my rival, her admirer Riversdale, had no chance when compared with me, though he was a very pleasant and good-looking young fellow. A doctor of the Royal Staff corps, Robert Riversdale was home on leave of absence like myself, but from America. It seemed to me that Isabel's blue eyes were always seeking mine, and that every glance we exchanged was half-complimentary and wholly caressing. They were glances of mute and secret intelligence, that we alone felt and understood.

"Riversdale's family lived in the neighbourhood of Stoketon Moat; they were wealthy, thus he was everyway an eligible suitor, and had been a kind of privileged dangler after the Vanes for a short time prior to my arrival. He had driven and ridden with them to see all the sights in the county; but his attentions were in no way decided, nor was his preference marked, until my decided admiration for Isabelie seemed as a spur alike to his jealousy and love.

"However, her residence in my aunt's house, our daily, almost hourly intercourse—the vast charm of propinquity, and the chances afforded by it—gave me every advantage over Riversdale; and after the snuff-coloured Bengalee girls, and the dreamy, tawny, and affected Eurasians or Indo-Britons, with whom we were compelled at times to associate when up country, the pure and soft English beauty of Isabel Vane, together with her sweetness of disposition, and a certain piquant playfulness of manner, were so pleasing, that, within a week after my return to the

Moat, I was fondly in love with her—madly, I may say, as I never did things by halves in those days.

“I was scarcely aware of the strength or depth of the passion that was growing up in my heart, until one day, when my aunt said—

“‘Why is it, Conyers, that your talk to me is for ever of Bella Vane? You are never weary of extolling her accomplishments——’

“‘But she has so many, aunt!’

“‘Her graceful style of conversation, her elegance of figure, her beauty, and so forth; do you love her, Conyers?’

“‘Yes, dear Aunt Singleton,’ said I, blushing like the boy I had been, rather than the man I was.

“‘Then tell her so, Conyers, and God bless you; for Bella, I know, will make a kind and loving wife to the man who is happy enough to win her.’

“My heart leaped within me, and my blood seem to course with renewed force through every vein, as Lady Singleton spoke thus, for already ideas of marrying, of being the actual proprietor, possessor, and protector of a girl so charming, came with her words.

“Well, encouraged thus, my declaration—fully expected, no doubt, by foregone conclusions—and her acceptance came about successfully in the usual fashion, or what I suppose to be such, for I never loved before, and have never loved since.

“In a leafy lane, where the purple plum, the golden apple, and the damson trees entwined their branches overhead, excluding the sun from the thick rank grass below, and where the wild honeysuckle and flowers by the wayside, filled the air with fragrance, as we rode slowly together, side by side, on a summer afternoon, it all came to pass somehow.

“We were long of turning our horses’ heads homeward, and the house-bell had summoned us thrice to dinner, ere I lifted her from her saddle with a caressing tenderness and an emotion of delight such as had never before thrilled through me, for we were engaged now; she was my own Isabel, and to be the wife of my heart, before we sailed together for India.

“We were rallied by the laughing Lyla and the golden-haired Katie, about our delay and return at so late an hour; and we must have had self-conscious or tell-tale faces, for the girls were not long in discovering our great secret; and even Riversdale, who unluckily dined with us that day, detected quickly enough on Isabel’s *engaged* finger, a ring which he knew well to be mine, for it was conspicuous enough to him, as he stood by her side to turn the music leaves, as she seated herself at the piano in the drawing-room, where usually music became the order of the evening.

"I, too, was near, and could detect the flush that mounted to his temples when his eyes fell on the ring, and how the words of compliment or flattery he was about to whisper in her half-averted ear, died away unuttered on his lips.

"He was too well-bred to question her, or make the least remark upon the subject; but pleading an after-dinner engagement, took his leave soon after; and I was weak enough to feel some triumph at being master of the position, and that the girl he admired so much and loved in secret, was mine—and mine for ever.

"For ever? Alas, could I then have foreseen the future?

"Three months afterwards the bells rang a merry wedding chime in the old church of Warrington, when Isabel and I knelt at the altar and were declared 'man and wife' by the white haired rector; and seldom, perhaps, has the sun shone through the quaint stained glass of those ancient windows on a lovelier bride than mine, or on two sweeter girls than Lyla and Katie, in their clouds of snowy tulle, as they knelt, sobbing, of course, behind her.

"A brother officer was to have been groomsmen, but an accident detained him, and by an odd chance or fatality, his post was occupied by Robert Riversdale, who acquitted himself to the satisfaction of all—the six bridesmaids in particular, for very striking the fellow looked in his rich staff uniform; though I fancied that his voice faltered when he congratulated me, and he turned deadly pale, as he kissed the cheek of Isabel; but I could forgive him these little weaknesses *then*; and as if to show that he had no secret repining at my success, he presented her with a magnificent suite of jewels, diamonds and opals set in gold and blue enamel—a suite an empress might have worn; and that evening saw us off to seclude ourselves in Wales, until the honeymoon waned.

"As our carriage drove away from the Moat, and I drew down the blinds and embraced her, caressing her head on my shoulder, 'Oh Isabel!' I exclaimed; 'my own Isabel—at last we are married and one!'

"'Married for life!' she murmured, with her face nestling in my neck.

"'Married for love,' I added.

"'Ycs, but for life, dearest Conyers—for life, too—and the life beyond, if such can be!' she added with an energy that haunted me even as her words did, when our dark and sorrowful future came.

"I shall never forget the delight of those remembered days—for they are but a memory now—the blissful days I spent with Isabel, amid the green vales, the frowning cliffs and soaring peaks of the old principality; in lonely places where the

wild goat, his long beard waving in the wind, leaped from crag to crag, rousing the golden eagle in his giddy eyrie ; or by secluded pools and mountain tarns, where the brown otter would rise suddenly to the surface, and, with a spotted trout between his teeth, vanish as quickly to his hole among the rank green sedges. 'The world forgetting, by the world forgot,' at least for a period, we spent it in a calm of joy and tenderness, till Lady Singleton began to weary for us, and urged our return to Stoketon, as I could spend but six months more in England, and would have to report myself at the *Dépôt* Battalion in Chatham, whither Isabel was of course to accompany me.

"How well I can yet recal our long Welsh ramble, the flat vale of the Teifi and the old church of St. David's ; the gloomy pass of Llanberris ; Craig Ceffyl, where the Welsh made their last brave stand against the 'Ruthless King ;' the lovely vale of Llangollen with all its luxuriant greenness and fertility—for we were never weary of wandering, and were full of love and enthusiasm for each other and for everything.

"I had no alloy to my happiness, not even when I found, as by chance I sometimes did, among Isabel's favourite books, a withered flower between the leaves, that had *not* been given by me, or 'To Isabel, from her friend R. R.,' pencilled on the fly-leaf, for Riversdale's hopes were gone for ever now. But if I progress thus, I fear you may find my story as weary as an old novel written in letters, than which, perhaps, I know of nothing more flat and prosy.

"After we had been some months at Stoketon, a child came to add to our happiness.

"When you see me seated here, a plain and rough old soldier, in his bare or half-furnished barrack-room—if not happy, at least content, like poor La Vallière in her convent—content to do without the luxuries and the tendernesses of life, you may think there is little of the poetry of it in me ; but there was much of it *then*, ere sorrow, care, and unmerited misfortune came upon me.

"A new joy seemed to spread a holy light over all our little circle when the baby came. I shall never forget the tender emotions that made my heart swell tremulously and filled my eyes with a moisture akin to tears. I felt grateful to God and happy with everybody, with the old village doctor, the wrinkled and tyrannical nurse, who assumed the command of the entire household ; with my benignant Aunt Singleton ; the radiant girls Lyla and Katie (exalted now to the sudden dignity of full-blown aunts), and more than all with my poor, pale darling Isabel, for to my enthusiastic mind, something of sanctity seemed to mingle with the love I bore her.

"I felt what the childless can never feel ; now more than

ever joined, as a certain writer has it, to the great community of man. Here was a little unit, that in the time to come should be a man, to live long after us, I hoped and prayed in my heart of hearts, honourably and well, beyond the years, when the sod had grown green above Isabel and me.

"So the baby grew the wonder of all our little community at Stoketon Moat; Aunt Singleton bestowed upon it a sponsorial silver mug, the handsomest that could be procured, and the white haired and red faced Rector gave it a name and made a little Christian of it, under the double cognomen of Guy Conyers; the latter for me, and the former for the old General who had led his brigade so gallantly at Vittoria and Toulouse; and so, happily passed the days till the time came when I found that I must appear in Chatham garrison, and our home was to be, thenceforward, a broken one!

"If our baby was a hale and sturdy little fellow who throve amazingly, it was otherwise with his mamma, for Isabel made a slow recovery, and was so weak and ailing, when the terrible time for my departure came, that by a consultation of physicians, it was impressed upon me, that she must imperatively remain at home, nor attempt to follow me to India, for perhaps six—certainly for four—months yet to come.

"This was a sad dictum to me, who knew that the transport which was to take me to the shores of Hindostan—the *Rangoon* Indiaman—was already lying opposite Tilbury Fort, taking in water and stores.

"I shall pass over our parting. It was sad, indeed; and long and frequently did I press both the pale mother and the golden-haired child to my breast ere I tore myself away, with a whirling brain and a bursting heart.

"‘To your care I confide them, dear Aunt Singleton,’ said I, as she embraced me at the door. ‘I am going now, and perhaps may not be here again before my hair is grey and wrinkles have taken the place of dimples.’

"The overland route had not then been developed, and going to India was, to many, the affair of a lifetime. I had tried to speak in jest, but, alas! I knew not how prophetically.

"I travelled night and day until I reported myself to the Commandant, old Sir William W., and assumed the command of the men of my own regiment, that were to embark next day.

"In the hurry of our departure, I had no time left me for a moment's reflection, luckily: and grey daybreak on the following morning saw us leave Chatham for Gravesend, five hundred strong, all drafts for various corps in India. And as we marched in the still and dewy dawn, to the air of ‘The Girl I Left Behind Me,’ every tap of the drums and every note of the sweet, low fifes, went keenly to my heart: for I thought of her I had

left behind in Cheshire, my girl-wife, my Isabel, with our baby at her breast !

"The cheers of the heedless and unthinking boys—for the detachments were composed of little else—who were off to see the world, each with sixty rounds of ammunition at his back, and ready to face anything—Old Scratch himself if he came against them—failed to rouse either my natural spirit or my military enthusiasm ; though I could remember the time, when the loud crash of the regimental band, the bright gleam of the bayonets, and the waving of the colours above nine hundred bearskin caps, with the measured tread of many feet, had kindled both when *last* I had marched to India, through the deep resounding arch of the old Picquet House, and under the guns of the great Spur Battery.

"Seven miles of dusty road brought us to Gravesend, where the *Rangoon* lay, a stately ship of eighteen hundred tons, hove short on her cable, with blue-peter flying at the foremast-head. All was confusion on board, for she was a great East Indiaman of the old school, built alike for war and traffic, carrying twenty eighteen-pounders, and eight thirty-twos on her main and lower decks. Everybody was bustling about, and the ship was a veritable Babel. Cuddy stores, with fresh and salt provisions, were being hoisted in from lighters on one side ; rusty shot and shell, as ballast, from a Woolwich tender, on the other. Casks and cases encumbered all the decks ; paint, tar, beer, tobacco, gin, and bilge-water, loaded the atmosphere above and below ; a drizzling rain was falling, and a thick white mist enveloped all the low flat shore ; the brick bastions, the curtain and fosse of Tilbury, which is a fort as Dutch in aspect as in character, since its chief strength lies, not in defending itself by fire, but in being able to lay the surrounding district under *water*.

"More than a hundred women, sailors' wives and sweethearts, were sent noisily ashore. Our men were 'told off' to their berths speedily, and amid the noise and bustle, the voice of Isabel, her face and the baby's came ever and anon as in a dream before me ; and with something of a sickened heart, I entered the great cabin.

"'Bravo, Singleton ! How goes it, old fellow ?' cried a familiar voice, and from amid a crowd of officers who were lounging and lunching about the table, some sitting, some standing, and all laughing and chatting gaily, Doctor Riversdale in his blue undress uniform, with sword and black belt on, came forward to greet me. 'So *you* are going out in the *Rangoon*, eh !'

"'Yes, with two hundred men from the dépôt. Are you ?'

"'Bound for Bombay I am, to be stationed there on the staff. But—but I don't see Mrs. Singleton with you.'

"I then explained, and my voice faltered as I spoke of her, that her health did not, as yet, permit her to accompany me to India. I know not now the words of Riversdale's reply; but the spirit of it impressed me with the idea that her absence proved rather a relief to him. To avoid talking of Isabel, even to my late rival, was impossible. He seemed to like the theme, and perhaps felt a grim satisfaction in the idea that she and I were to be separated for a time.

"The voyage passed over pleasantly enough. At St. Helena, at the Cape, and with several homeward-bound ships, we left letters for those we had left behind us—those we loved, and hoped, if spared by war and disease, to meet again. And the month of December saw us with our various regiments in the army of Sir Hugh Gough, advancing from Agra against the Mahrattas engaged in that war, which was incident to the quarrel about the occupation of Cutch, all of which, however, has nothing to do with my story, save that I was a unit in the army destined to annex the principality of Scinde to the British Crown.

"On the 29th of December we crossed the Chumbal (a river which flows through Central India, from the Vendhya mountains to the Jumna) without loss or much trouble, and had just halted and piled arms to have a little tiffin, when the mails from Europe overtook us, and I got a letter from Isabel, the first I had received since leaving her and home, an event that seemed now to have happened ages ago.

"She was getting slowly better, and hoped to rejoin me soon—at least, to be in Bombay, awaiting the conclusion of the war in Scinde. My eyes suffused painfully, and my heart beat wildly, as I read on; for though petty and trivial to others, situated as I was then, all that followed was dear indeed to me, for it was about our little Guy Conyers. He was growing *such* a baby, *such* a love as never was seen or heard of since babies were first invented! His nose was fast resembling mine (I remembered it a most unpromising button), and he had such a pretty pouting mouth, just like Katie's; his eyes were already noticing, and often smiled from his berceauette at things other people couldn't see; but they were *such* eyes! How he crowed and laughed, and bit the nurse's finger with his toothless gums; and would persist in kicking off the woollen bootikins Aunt Katie had knitted for him, and his little pink feet seemed more comfortable without them!

"How I devoured all this. I who once upon a time thought all babies most stupidly alike, deuced bores and nuisances, to be avoided and shunned in all trains and steamers. And so while I read on, the picture of Isabel, with her downcast eyes and long lashes, turned to this particular and most wonderful

baby, crowing on her knee, or nestling in her tender bosom, came vividly and fondly before my mental eye, till I was roused from my dream of home by the bugles sounding 'fall in,' and the voice of Sir Hugh's senior aide-de-camp saying to the Colonel as he rode past,—

"The enemy are in front. Please get the battalion formed. Her Majesty's 39th will commence the attack—the 56th Native Infantry to support : stand to your arms !"

"I placed the letter in my breast pocket, drew my sword, and, with a sigh, joined my company.

"I need not detail at any length the battle of Maharajpore, though it proved a fatal field to me.

"The British were fourteen thousand strong, with forty guns ; but the Mahrattas, a fierce and warlike race, trained to arms from their earliest years, mustered twenty-one thousand, horse and foot, with one hundred pieces of cannon.

"Under a terrible fire, which, in the end, killed and wounded seven hundred and ninety of our officers and men, we rushed upon them ; the old 39th, or Dorsetshire—*Primus in Indus*, as their colours have it—in the van, and the 56th Bengal Infantry supporting them well and gallantly, soon drove the foe from their guns, bayoneting the gholandazees on every hand.

"Rallying in the village, the Mahrattas again showed front, and fought with blind fury. There the Gwalior troops, after discharging their long matchlocks right into our faces, flung them down, and, like the Scots Highlanders of old, charged us sword in hand, with target up and head stooped behind it. With frantic desperation they fell, like a herd of wild tigers, upon our regiment ; and the whole of my company got mingled with them in a confused *mêlée*, opposing their bayonets or clubbed muskets to the keen trenchant blades of the Indians, who were ultimately routed, with the loss of four thousand men, and all their beautiful cannon save *one*, which they carried off the field, and to which I was fastened by a rope, a mutilated and manacled prisoner of war !

"The catastrophe happened thus :—

"Amid the terrible *mêlée* in front of the village, and just when Major Stopford and Captain Codrington, of the 40th Regiment, fell before the very muzzles of the Mahratta cannon, the aspect of the enemy was wild and imposing, and I shall never forget it. Their shrill, mad yells mingled with the cheers of the British, and added to the general roar of the conflict ; while their flowing garments and turbans of every brilliant colour, scarlet, yellow, crimson, blue, and white, studded with precious stones and embroidered with gold, made their excited masses seem gorgeous as a vast field of flowers. Large round shields covered with brass bosses protected their breasts, and

over these we saw their swarthy faces, their shining eyes, and crooked sabres, that flashed and glittered in the sunshine. Personally, they were all powerful men, and their strength and activity were only equalled by their recklessness of life and ferocity of purpose.

"'Save me ! save me, Singleton, for the love of God !' cried a voice ; and dismounted with his horse shot under him, his bare head (for he had lost his cap), exposed to twenty uplifted sabres, I saw Doctor Riversdale lying among their feet ; and I did save him, by a superhuman effort, at the head of twenty determined men. But as we fell back, keeping our bayonets at the charge, a volley of grape and canister shot, from their last and only gun, swept away the twenty brave fellows who adhered to me. I fell among the enemy alone, was cut down by a tulwar, and dragged to the rear of the village.

"I fainted from loss of blood, and on recovering, found myself many miles away from the corpse-strewn village of Maharajpore, and in the hands of a Mahratta chief and a few of his men, now outlaws and fugitives among the mountains ; for their army had broken and fled, totally defeated and irretrievably scattered."

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE MAJOR'S STORY CONCLUDED.

"MY limbs were stiff and sore, for I was still bound to the cannon, which was a nine-pounder fieldpiece.

"The chief, Ali Khan, whose whim it was to keep me prisoner instead of cutting me to pieces, was an outlaw now ; several regiments of Gough's army, both infantry and cavalry, were sent into the country of the Mahrattas at the expense of the Gwalior Government, to inforce peace and order ; so he, with his followers, were compelled to lurk among the mountains in the north-west of Scinde.

"There were times when I repined bitterly, and thought that but for Riversdale's presence in front of the village, when he ought to have been in the rear of the attacking column looking after the wounded, I should not have made that desperate onslaught to rescue him, and so been *taken* myself !

"Alas ! you see that my story, unlike most others, begins with a happy marriage instead of *ending* with it, as most novels do, and all comedies at the fall of the curtain.

"Like most, if not nearly all the Mahratta troops, the followers of Ali Khan were cavalry, hardy and ferocious fellows. Their only arms were swords, spears, and matchlocks, like those used in the wars of Cromwell ; their only equipage, blankets

and horse-cloths. With these slight incumbrances they easily rode fifty miles a day, feeding their horses on whatever they would eat; whether it was the ripe corn growing in the fields or the dry thatched roofs of a village, was all the same to the Mahrattas of Ali Khan, who was a stern and unyielding warrior, vain of real or supposed descent from Sevajee, the founder of the old Mahratta empire.

"*En route* he carried off several children, and I now learned for the first time that his people were fond of possessing slaves, and hence their capture of me.

"Over miles upon miles of a flat country covered with wild bushes, and many more of desert sand, they fled from Maharajpore, till we entered upon a district studded by almost impervious thickets and tamarisk shrubs which also entwine their branches; and beyond this desolate region we reached the mountains that look down on Western Scinde, where they halted, encamped, and lurked for several weeks to rest and heal their wounds, subsisting the while by forays and the plunder they carried off in their march. Sometimes Ali Khan made the neighbourhood too hot to hold him; and then, by a swift movement, he would favour other regions, perhaps in Beloochistan, with a short residence; but he generally preferred to hover in the hills to the north of Tattah, which are barren and totally uninhabited, so that we were often compelled to plunder for food, almost to the gates of Brahminabad, its ancient capital.

"Chained to that accursed gun, my sole sleeping-place being between its wheels at night, exposed to the dews with only a horse-rug to cover me (while the Mahrattas lived in tents), exposed to the risk of being helplessly strangled by Thugs, devoured by tigers or jackals, or being bitten by serpents such as the terrible Braminee cobra, stung by insects all day, and having the disgusting green bugs among my matted locks and beard by night—chained to the gun, I say, like Ixion on his wheel in the Infernal Regions, I thought—oh, how deeply and desperately—of her I loved, of my home, of free and pleasant England, far, far away; of Stoketon Moat and Cheshire with all its shady woods, its lakes and meres; its parks of emerald green, its shady lanes and hedgerows; of the broad Mersey winding to the sea; of budding spring and glorious summer, brown autumn, with its golden harvest fields and crisp foliage, and jolly winter, with its snow on hill and wold, its green bays and scarlet berries in church-porch and in hall.

"Changes like these I had none!

"It was a period of horror, weariness, and despair—a despair that was black and hopeless, and daily, with a sickened heart, I surveyed the arid plains on one hand and the barren moun-

tains of Tattah on the other, hoping against hope for some rescue or relief, and in this slavery more than a year passed away, without an event save an occasional buffalo hunt, when hides were wanted for shields or harness, (as the Mahrattas cared not for the beef), or an occasional *kutha*, a popular amusement of the tribe, when recitations and songs are given by professional musicians or story-tellers; and frequently I heard them sing of the battle of Maharajpore, and how the great Sahib-log, Ellenborough Bahadour, had been amid the thickest of the conflict, mounted on a snow-white elephant, in the howdah of which I had certainly seen his lordship freely exposing himself to the risk of shot and shell.

"My sabre wound had been allowed to heal as Nature chose, and after hemorrhage ceased it closed rapidly; but unluckily for myself, by the skilful and tender manner in which I bound up a bayonet-stab received by Ali Khan, the Mahrattas conceived that I was a doctor, and hence kept me closely secured to the gun, to frustrate any attempt to escape.

"Isabel's letter was found upon my person, and conceived to be some great medical secret; the ink lines were carefully washed off the paper, and the dilution swallowed on speculation by Ali Khan and his favourite wife; but I had many cures to perform, many cuts and stabs and bullet-holes to probe and patch and bind, with the terror of death hanging over me if I failed, or a patient fevered or died; but luckily for me the Mahrattas were all Hindus, extremely temperate in what they ate or drank, so I was pretty successful in my practice, and earned the goodwill of all, particularly that of the women of the tribe, who were as hardy and as muscular as the men, and regularly shared every labour with them save that of fighting; but it was long before I succeeded in convincing them that I was *not* a doctor, and by that time I was so weary of existence, as to care little whether they shot me, to save further feeding or trouble.

"Released but at rare intervals, and even then always closely watched, I had been *five* years chained to the gun, when it was abandoned in a deep *nullah* as a useless incumbrance. I was then worn to bone and brawn; but I had lost all heart and hope. Heaven knows how I had been fed, for I had been treated often like a dog—a creature of the lowest caste.

"Offers of ransom I had often made in vain; and chance of rescue I had none. Neither had I any prospect of escape. I was without horse, or arms, or money, or even a knowledge of *where* I was, so devious had been our wanderings; and at times I could not say with certainty whether we were on the confines of Beloochistan, or among the mountains of Kelat.

"The Hindu religion admits of no proselytes, so I was never

troubled with any attempts to convert me ; the institutes of Menou, compiled 1200 B.C., had quite settled all that, so that I was safer than in the hands of Mohammedans, who might have compelled me to choose between the turban and the bowstring.

"And so a sixth year passed away !

"Was my Isabel living or dead ? Had she perished of a broken heart ? I tried to remember of a widow that had done so, but failed. Was our little child living now ? If so he should be verging on seven years old. Seven years old—oh, my God ! I would press my hands over my eyes and strive to portray him, for I knew that the child must grow, and change with his growth ; but I could only picture him as I had seen him last, nestling in his mother's bosom.

"Then I would think with a shudder, Alas ! how long may he have been in his little grave ?

"Ever present were such thoughts as these ; of Isabel and the baby in 'the woollen bootikins' which had been worked for it, as her last and only letter told, by Katie—little Katie, whom I remembered with her masses of golden hair ; the rippling locks of which would neither keep in knot or net, but hung like an aureole, a shining glory round her smiling face.

"Kate would be four-and-twenty now, and most likely herself a mother.

"I knew that I must long, long since have been gazetted out of the service ; numbered with the lost, the missing, or the dead ; that another must have filled my rank and place in the regiment, where by that time my very name must be forgotten !

"And so I grieved at the thought of these things, till my heart grew sick with sorrow and grieving. Oh, how true it is, that 'the heart knoweth its own bitterness, and a stranger intermeddleth not with its joys.'

"Times there were when I longed for death, for, as Dryden says in his 'Don Sebastian,' I felt keenly but bitterly that 'Death is to man in misery, a sleep,' but in that sleep, I should have no dreams of Isabel or home.

"One day—I shall never, never forget it—these, and such sad and bitter thoughts as these, were maddening me while I was grooming the horses of Ali Khan, beautiful animals of the Candahar and Thibet breeds, and when my task was over I sat down beside a tamarisk tree, and actually gave way to tears. We were then encamped, as I knew, not far from the Indus, in a place where a grove of peepul trees grew round a little lake beside a Hindu temple of white marble, the bronze idols in which the Mahratta women were wont to fan for hours, after smearing them with ointments, butter, and ghee.

"The Sahib-log (white gentleman) is always sad!" said a voice close by me; and on looking up I saw Ali Khan, with his shield of buffalo hide slung on his back, and leaning on his Kelat spear, while his dark gleaming eyes observed me with something of wonder and much of contempt.

"I have thoughts, O Khan, that make me sad," said I, rising and crossing my hands upon my breast.

"Are you not kindly used among us?" he asked.

"I have certainly eaten your salt and bread; but both have been watered by the tears of misery."

"Why?"

"I have a wife and child—"

"I have several wives and children too; yet were I a captive, would they cost me a tear? No. I am a man! Go—our lives are in the hands of Bramah—our doom in the hands of Kali—even yours, a creature without caste or future."

"And turning away with stolidity and scorn, he mounted the horse I had just saddled for him, and with his long tasselled spear in his hand, rode off on a scouting expedition—for the appearance of some Bombay cavalry in our vicinity had rendered him somewhat uneasy."

"He had scarcely left me, when I heard some shrill cries from the women of his followers who were dipping and bleaching their linen dresses in the little lake beside the peepul grove. A child had fallen into it from a rock where he had been gathering flowers; it was the deepest part of the lake, and the little creature rose twice and sunk again before I stirred myself."

"What is it to me?" thought I bitterly; "would that every Mahratta in the land were in the same perilous predicament."

"A third time the boy rose and wildly threw up his little brown hands and arms, while his half-shriek came over the water as he vanished again. At that moment a thought of my own child flashed upon my mind, and plunging in, I dived successfully, saved and brought the little Mahratta cub to dry land; but barely in time, for some hours elapsed before I succeeded in perfectly restoring him to life and consciousness, and ere I became aware that it was Sevajee, the favourite child of Ali Khan, I had rescued from a watery grave!"

"With all his assumed stolidity and apparent sternness of heart, the Mahratta chief was melted towards me now, and in a burst of gratitude he gave me my liberty!"

"Go," said he; "here are a swift horse, good arms, my own, and a bag of rupees. You are free to join your people. Thirty miles from this, near a temple of Seva, on the left bank of the Indus, you will find them. Go—and Brahma, Kali and Vishnu

be your guides, and may their arms overshadow you, even as those of the blessed banian tree overshadow the earth !

"This was the best and holiest wish a Hindu could give me, as they pay divine honours to this enormous tree.

"You may imagine that I was not long in availing myself of the permission so suddenly given.

"Like one in a dream, one who had suddenly shaken off a long nightmare that has been protracted to the verge of madness, I rode all that afternoon at a breathless pace, not without fears that Ali Khan might change his mind, or my horse, arms, and rupees should excite the cupidity of some of his people who might follow me ; and ere nightfall I found myself in a little flying camp formed by a battalion of the Queen's troops (the 'old Springers'), and a squadron of the 1st Bombay Lancers, whose French grey uniforms, faced with white, I hailed with a shout of joy as I rode towards their videttes.

"On that day I had been exactly six years and four months a prisoner !

"On hearing my story, the officers treated me with every kindness and commiseration, and while the Lancers departed on a vain search for Ali Khan and his people, no time was lost in having me transmitted to Bombay.

"I had been returned among *the killed* at the battle of Maharajpore, and so circumstantial were the details of my having been cut down and dreadfully mangled by the Mahratta swordsmen, that I had some trouble in proving my own identity.

"The years of my captivity had seen many changes, and thus I, who had gone out by the *Rangoon*, Indiaman, round the Cape, and up the Arabian Sea, came home by the overland route, which was just being got into working order, but we crossed the desert with a caravan. So eager was I, that the six weeks of the homeward journey, with its ever-changing scenes, seemed interminable ; and telegraph, or Indian cable, there were none. I reached London well nigh destitute ; but burning with impatience for news of Isabel and home, having counted more than ever the hours since I was a free man.

"I attended the Commander-in-Chief's *levée* at the Horse Guards, where my weird and wild, or hunted aspect, excited considerable speculation among the fashionably-dressed loungers in the ante-room. He promised to look after me promptly ; but 'the Liberals were in office,' as he told me, with a peculiar and inexplicable smile ; so my back pay was refused on the plea that 'the country had lost my services for six years and four months ;' my progressive rank also was declined, so that I, who had been well up among the subalterns of my own corps at the battle of Maharajpore, was now, when gazetted anew,

placed at the foot of twenty-four lieutenants of the Royal Fusileers.

"My wife ! They could tell me nothing about her. 'Why ?' I asked passionately.

"'Because my rank and services did not entitle her to a pension ;' so I turned on my heel with mutiny in my heart, and on my lips a bitter malison on 'the Liberals' who were in office.

"On my aunt, Lady Singleton, depended all my hopes now ; so I set out for Stoketon by the first train from London.

"Already in the whirl of events my past period of love, and my marriage with Isabel Vane, had begun to seem but a tiny patch in the chequered web of my existence ; but it was a spot so bright and fair, so pure and happy, that I clung to the memory of it, as being well worth ten times all my other years together.

"My heart and soul yearned for her, and as the train bounded along the London and North-Western line my mind went back to the day when we set out from Stoketon on our joyous wedding trip to Wales, and the affectionate energy with which she insisted we were married 'for love and for life !' Would that gush of affection fill our hearts again ? or was it one of those joys which have no renewal in this world of change ?

"As I approached Stoketon Moat, and saw the dear old house with its clustered chimneys, its quaint oriels and deeply-mullioned windows shining in the sun, and half-hidden by dark green ivy, flowering clematis, and fragrant jasmine, I lifted my hat, and inspired by the memory of all the terrors and hardships I had undergone, exclaimed in a low voice—

"'My God—I thank Thee for this day !'

"Is it blasphemy—oh, I hope not—to say that I had little perhaps to be thankful for in having escaped the perils of Maharajpore, and survived my sufferings among the mountains of Tattah and Beloochistan ?

"The house was occupied by strangers, who viewed me with coldness and mistrusted my appearance of agitation.

"'Lady Singleton had died three years ago—Mr. Vane's people they knew nothing about—had never even heard of them,' I was informed by a sleek and well fed butler who was about to close the door in my face—the door of the house that was once my home.

"'Are any of Dr. Riversdale's family in the neighbourhood ?' I inquired anxiously.

"Yes ; the doctor has resided at his father's house since the old gentleman died about a year ago.'

"'Thanks,' said I, and turned wearily away, and conscious that I was a source of vulgar speculation to the menials of the

strange family now occupying what, as I have said, was once my home, I passed down the old and well-known avenue to issue out upon the highway that led to Warrington.

"Riversdale, I learned from the lodge-keeper, had retired upon half-pay, and had now an extensive practice in the neighbourhood. From him, then, I should perhaps learn all, and a few minutes' brisk walking brought me to his villa, a handsome new house, embosomed among some fine old trees.

"'Doctor Riversdale is always visiting his patients at this hour,' the servant informed me; 'but Mrs. Riversdale is at home,' she added, ushering me into a drawing-room, the splendour of which seemed wondrous to me after my sojourn among the sordid tents of Ali Khan.

"'I have no card,' said I, having omitted to provide myself with such a luxury, or forgotten all about such things, 'and the lady cannot know me: but say an old brother officer of the doctor is anxious to see her.'

"'Why did I become a soldier?' thought I, while surveying the comforts of Riversdale's home, and seeing his children. I had no doubt they were his; two boys and a girl, fair haired little things, gambolling on the lawn in the sunshine; and all the inclination for what Jean Paul Richter calls 'cottage smoke and sitting-still-comfort' came over me. Thus might mine have been merry among the Stoketon woods! Oh, the years I have lost—years of love and joy with Isabel!

"Escaping from her brothers, the little girl toddled through the drawing-room window, which opened in the French fashion down to the floor; and then impelled, I know not by what secret impulse, I drew her towards me and kissed her so tenderly on the forehead, that she shrank back abashed and eyed me dubiously, for I was tanned to almost negro blackness, had a bushy beard, together with what must have seemed to her the eyes of an ogre—the eyes of one who for fully seven years, had been daily face to face with Death!

"Just as the poor child shrunk from me, the drawing-room door opened, and there entered a lady who bowed with a well bred smile of inquiry and paused, surveying me earnestly.

"Though more matronly in form, and a trifle rounder perhaps, her face was still that of Isabel, the girl I had left behind me. Womanly and thoughtful, her eyes were as sparkling and inquiring as of old, but animated by wonder now and inexpressible tenderness (for my aspect seemed so war-worn), till suddenly tears and terror filled them as they gazed into mine. The mouth, so exquisitely cut, was full and fine, till it quivered and blanched, while the skin of her delicate face was smooth as the lining of a white and pink shell.

"'Isabel!' I exclaimed, and opened my arms; but shrinking

back, she uttered a wild cry of anguish and despair, and sank on a sofa, half fainting, and holding up her hands deprecatingly, between herself and me. 'Touch me not,' was what her mute gesture seemed to say.

"I then perceived that she had two plain hoops upon her wedding finger.

"*Two?*

"I dared not approach, but stood bewildered as if rooted to the carpet, for now I saw it all—I saw it *all*; and that a great and terrible grief was about to come upon me!

"She was the wife of Robert Riversdale!

"We stood apart, she shrinking and I doubting. Oh! was this the meeting—this the moment—for which I had longed and yearned, and thirsted, amid the protracted misery of the years that were past? Gasping, she gazed at me, while she did so, clutching wildly the cushions of the sofa; and there was an expression of unutterable bewilderment, of keen intensity, in her eyes.

"'Oh, merciful Heaven! Conyers Singleton, can this be you?' she exclaimed, in a low voice, like a wail.

"There was no embrace between us—no gladness, but only intolerable fear in both our hearts; we did not even shake hands, and she was my wife!

"'Oh, Isabel, and is it so? while I, after all those years that I have been a prisoner of war, a hunted fugitive, a wretched Christian slave, chained by the leg to a field-piece, among people whose faces and voices were to me but as those of wild animals—is it thus we meet and thus you greet me?' I said, mournfully. 'Isabel, what weariness of the world is in my heart—speak, or I shall fall at your feet!'

"Indeed, the room seemed to whirl round me, and I clung to the marble mantelpiece for support.

"'You seem to have come back as it were from the grave to reproach me; yet, oh, Conyers! I have nothing to reproach myself with,' she replied, speaking with great difficulty, while she placed a hand upon her heart as if to stay its wild beating, and a ghastly whiteness blanched all her beautiful face. 'The misery of this meeting is known only to—to God and me.'

"'And you have in my absence given to another your heart, your affection, which I deemed my own—for *life*, you once said?'

"'Reproach me not; all the world told me you were dead. I read the Gazette myself, and but too keenly remember, even at this hour, the agony of that in which I saw your name as among the killed. My hand, in time, was given to another.'

"'To Riversdale?'

"'To Riversdale; but my heart never—never. Oh, I shall go mad!' She began to speak wildly and incoherently, and

then added, 'In those dear past days I loved you and you only—oh, yes, I loved you then so dearly, so truly, Conyers!'

"And now, Isabel!"

"I love you still, dearest Conyers, but that love will turn my brain. My little child—*our* little child, Conyers,' she added, with moving pathos in her voice and eyes, 'was dead; Lyla and Katie were about to be married. I had no one to love, and no tie seemed to bind me to you, but sad, sad memory. Oh, what shall I say? how explain myself? A mother—a wife, and yet no wife! Riversdale loved me before I saw you, Conyers.'

"Nay, not before your girlhood."

"Before your return from Ghuznee; but that pleads nothing, I am aware, for I loved you then and you only."

"And since, Isabel—since?"

"Alas! do not question me—and yet you must."

"Surely some little explanation is due to me!" said I, with the forced calmness of settled despair. "Oh, that I had never returned from Ghuznee or learned to love you; or would to God that He had permitted me to perish at Maharajpore?"

"I was lonely and helpless, Conyers—oh, so lonely and helpless in my supposed widowhood," said she, making a great effort to speak, for voice and sense seemed alike to be failing her. "I respected the long-tried affection of Riversdale, which had survived even my marriage with you. He told me that he owed his life on that fatal field to you. Oh, how I mourned for you and how I loved your memory are known only to myself and *One* with whom there can be no secrets, and who knows all things! Could I help myself? and now—*now—now*," she exclaimed, while casting her eyes despairingly to Heaven, and striking her hands together, 'am I to be torn from my children—his children, *his and mine*—even from the little helpless baby in its berceauette!"

"Not by *me*, Isabel," said I, while on my aching heart those piercing words fell like drops of molten lead; "not by me. I shall go forth again to seek death more surely now, and cross your path no more. One kiss—only one kiss—even *he* could not refuse me that, and then never again shall we meet on this side of the grave."

"We both sobbed bitterly as I took one brief but passionate embrace. I laid her gently on the sofa and rang the bell, because she had fainted. Then I quitted the house of Riversdale never to enter it again!"

"To me it seemed that I must be in a dream from which I should surely awaken. The sun was shining in all the glory of a summer noontide on the green woodlands and greener meadows, but I felt no warmth in its rays and my teeth

chattered as I walked on, I knew not, cared not whither. So ended this terrible meeting—this interview of agony.

"I felt as one who was enveloped in the horror of a great and sudden darkness—one who had gone from the world itself, into the cold shadow of death.

"I have but little more to tell you now. Believing that I was dead, my aunt, Lady Singleton, on the death of my infant boy, bequeathed all she possessed to charitable institutions; and I cared not to dispute her will, for a few months after saw me again in India, and face to face with the hard-fighting Sikhs at Chillianwallah. I strove hard to throw my life away; but it seemed to be charmed now. I never received a scratch, nor has bullet or blade been near me since the day of Maharajpore.

"A few weeks after our victory over the Sikhs, I read the death of Isabel in the *Times*, and then I knew that my interview with her, and the intolerable mental agony consequent to the falsehood of her position, had destroyed her? My poor Isabel!

"We were then on the march for Goojerat, and none of my comrades knew why in that battle, and for many a day long after it, the hilt of my sword was covered with crape—the only mourning in which I dared indulge, for the miserable fate of the girl I had left behind me."

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE ROUTE FOR VARNA.

UNQUESTIONABLY Cyril was unhappy in his mind about the new state of relations between himself and Mary Lennox. There were times when he thought that perhaps he had acted rashly in yielding so suddenly to the dictates of jealousy and the angry pride it engenders. He thought, too, over Singleton's remarkable story, and remembered how he had conceived the idea of a private marriage, and had even urged it upon Mary—a measure by which he must have left a young and almost unfriended bride behind him. Singleton's wife had wealth, position, and relations to rally round her, yet her fate had been a hapless one; and Cyril, as he reflected on the contingencies of war, felt somewhat consoled, that he and Mary were still free.

"Let me think of her no more—no more!" he said, mentally. "Ah, how true it is that 'violets plucked, the sweetest showers will not make grow again.' And now my flower of love has been crushed in its bloom!"

Fortunately for him, in the short time that intervened now before the departure of the regiment, his days were too fully

occupied to leave him great room for reflection ; and the tours of duty entailed upon an officer in such a place as Chatham, even in time of peace, are incessant ; thus, if they engaged, they at the same time bored him by their continuous hard work and monotonous routine.

When not on guard or piquet, and when captain of the day, he had to make incessant inspections of the barrack-rooms, to see that the iron beds were turned up in the morning, and the ventilators open ; also before and after, and at every meal, to ascertain that the messes were in order, wholesome, and sufficient. Then came visits to the patients in hospital, the prisoners in the cells and guard-room, the children in school, for the number of each and all were to be inserted in his daily report. Then there were courts-martial and of inquiry ; committees of all kinds, mess and band ; the expenses of the last ball ; and baby-linen for soldiers' wives ; the foreign outfit for his company to be provided ; the settlement of women who were to sail, and those who were to be left behind (to starve, perhaps)—a mournful fate determined by ballot ; then came squabbles about barrack damages, broken glass, nail holes, and candle blisters, over which barrack-sergeants groaned and quarter-masters became furious, as they were generally found in the "married corners" of the rooms, for in Cyril's corps the angles of each apartment were still appropriated in the old fashion, to the wedded couples, because experience had taught Sir Edward Elton that the motherly and domestic care of the women, when thrifty and respectable, added to the comfort of his men.

Add to all these, the arrangement of little scrapes into which Pomfret, Jack Probyn, and some of his younger comrades had fallen by "flying kites to raise the wind," as they phrased it, among the Jew usurers and money-lenders, the Shylocks of Hammond Place—fifty per cent. wretches—whose eyes, unlike those of poor Banquo, were full enough of "speculation."

He had to leave his card on several garrison belles, who had bloomed, and blushed, and faded ; but by the triumph of art over nature, had bloomed and blushed again through many fruitless seasons, amid a vast number of military changes, which saw the beardless ensigns they danced with at one period, come back at another as bronzed captains or majors. Invitations were showered upon him ; there were even attempts made to revive one or two dead flirtations—sickly attempts indeed, for his love-wound was still green, and his heart was with the solitary girl at Lonewoodlee.

Besides all these little occupations, there were revolver practice in the dry ditch, pontooning at Rochester Bridge, where, under the shadow of the old Norman Castle of the Bishop of

Bayeux, the Medway runs so fast, that it sometimes swept away a life or two ; and escalading with storming ladders about day-break at the walls of the Spur Battery, a dangerous style of practice, too, when the bayonets of one's mimic forlorn hope are unpleasantly close behind. As a finale, he had to get his own Crimean outfit, for which Sir John enclosed him an ample cheque : to wit, gutta-percha jack boots, waterproof cloak and cape, camp bed, ground sheets, and blankets ; a canteen for two persons ; lantern, basin, and bucket ; bullock trunks and slings, and much more lumber, all of which he got for the small sum of eighty guineas, "dog sheep," from a Jew contractor ; so one way or another, it must be acknowledged that Captain Wedderburn's hands were pretty full, and that his sword could be seldom from his side.

Thus the days were got rapidly through ; but in the morning when he awoke, like a flood of gloom, his hopeless quarrel with Mary—his Mary, once so loved and petted—rushed upon him, and despite the bustle around, for many an hour his eyes and heart were far away at Willowdean and Lonewoodlee ; and a fair face he had last seen there—Mary, tearful, trembling, and pale in her muslin dress, with her delicate neck and adorable arms—haunted him.

Torn by conflicting emotions and unstable in purpose, he had come to the merciful resolution of writing to her, when a letter was placed in his hand by the drum-major, who acted as regimental postman.

It was from his mother, Lady Wedderburn ; and after a great deal of verbosity about Gwenny—to the effect of how much and how often she spoke of *him* ; how *sad* she had looked since his departure ; a wish that Horace was safe with the Dépôt (*why*, she did not add), which she hoped would be stationed in England and *not* in Scotland—she mentioned Mary Lennox, and as he read on, Cyril felt the blood rushing to his temples.

"As for that unfortunate girl at Lonewoodlee, the popular verdict, I regret to say, is still against her. Your father alone talks in an extenuating manner, but then we all know that he is so exceedingly simple ! I am so glad that you are beyond her dangerous influence now, dearest Cyril. Only think of what would have been your fate—your future, if you had been lured into an engagement with one whom society could not have received after what has occurred."

He crushed the cruel letter up, but after a time smoothed it out and read on.

"I hope my darling boy is now happy in his mind, and quite cured of his absurd *local* fancy ; for Mrs. M'Guffog, the minister's wife, told me that she has heard on all hands the rumour

confirmed, that the visit to Chesterhaugh, of which we know, and which caused you such suffering and annoyance, was too probably not the only one."

Cyril placed his mother's letter in his desk, which he locked, and buckling on his sword with a vicious jerk, set forth to attend to his duties, so there was no letter written to poor Mary Lennox.

The mess, the great solace of barrack-life, was now broken up completely; the splendid epergnes, trophies, and plate, either packed or "handed over" to the *Depôt*; and Cyril hailed with satisfaction the dawn of the day that was to see the Royal Fusileers off to share in the coming perils and glories of the Eastern War; and every heart in their ranks beat high, save those, perhaps, who were leaving hearts that were swollen with sorrow behind.

The notes of the *réveille*, now low, now high and swelling, with the drowsy, softened roll of the drums, rang through the square and echoing streets of the great barrack just as the grey dawn stole in. It is an air sweet and mournful in its cadence, and is known in the service traditionally as the Scottish *Réveille*, with which the English was originally played alternately; and ere the last soft notes of it had died away, Cyril heard the pealing bugles of his own regiment sounding loudly and high the "turn out."

The brief, restless, and half-sleepless night passed away, and ere long, belted and accoutred, he yawned and shivered in the cool atmosphere of that spacious and roughly-gravelled barrack square, where, since the middle of the last century, so many hundred thousand men have been drilled and sent forth to all parts of the world; for Chatham is our great military school—"a mighty military hell," Beamish was wont to term it.

The pale morning star was melting into the amber sunrise, but the purple shadows yet lay deep along the wooded terrace and the lower barracks. The voices of the birds were heard as they carolled merrily in the old bushes and tiny gardens before the quarters of the commandant, the staff, and other officers, when the adjutant, about half an hour after daybreak, began to form the regiment, which was in heavy marching order, in open column of companies.

The colours, borne by Pomfret and another subaltern, were in their oilskin cases; the officers and men wore white canvas haversacks; but Bingham and a few of the former affected smart courier bags. The Fusileers were in complete order for service in the field; their blankets rolled on the top of their knapsacks; their great coats folded; their canteens and camp-kettles strapped on; thus their aspect was such as no soldiers had been in Chatham Barracks since Bonaparte landed from Elba.

A few of the Fusileers had been late of coming into barracks over-night ; others had undoubtedly got groggy at the rural tavern known as the Hook and Hatchet, or other places ; but not a man was absent on this auspicious morning, though some were noisy and jocular.

"Answer to your name, sir !" cried Beamish to one of his men as the roll was called.

"Faith, but it's blisterin' dry my tongue is this morning, Captain dear."

"Dry, after all you drank last night, Barney ?"

"Faith, if I had drunk more, may be I wouldn't have been so thirsty this blessed morning."

"Silence !" This was the sole rebuke for Barney's chatter, which on any other occasion would have secured him a sojourn in the guard-house.

Mounted on his fine black horse Vidette, Sir Edward Elton was in front of the line, conning over the *route*, an official document, which stated that it was "Her Majesty's will and pleasure," that he was to proceed to Chatham, with thirty-five officers, forty-seven sergeants and drummers, and eight hundred and twenty-eight rank and file of the Royal Fusileers, to Southampton, "there to embark for the coast of Bulgaria, on board of such tonnage as may be provided," for so the formula ran.

The officers were around him in a group, and all were chatting gaily.

"So we are bound for Bulgaria ; but wherever that may be, the devil a bit of me knows," said Beamish, whose whiskers were so black that they seemed a mere continuation of his bearskin cap ; "and there is small honour in being a traveller now, when all the world is rushing about by steam and rail, and fellows go to pot tigers in Bengal and lions in Africa, when their fathers were content to look after snipe in an Irish bog, or grouse in the Highlands."

"Good morning, Wedderburn," said Sir Edward, as Cyril saluted him and presented his hand ; "whatever it may be at Southampton, here the wind is fair for running down the Channel. We don't go by steamer I find," he added, pointing to the great vane on the barrack-roof—an iron rifleman, the size of life, who has levelled his weapon in the wind's eye ever since the days of Waterloo.

"Well, Bingham," said one, "have you had a tender leave-taking before breakfast ?"

"Breakfast !" repeated the other, twirling the tassels of his sash ; "who could make one at this inhuman hour ? I have had a dose of brandy-and-seltzer."

"A bad beginning," said Beamish. "I have breakfasted at the mess-house by candle-light (which made me think it sup-

per), on devilled kidneys, fried mackerel, and a jolly glass of Sauterne, to make a man of me for the day."

"And what is that huge flask slung over your sword-belt, Pat?"

"What would it be, Wedderburn, my boy, but 'condensed sunshine'—the best condensation I know of."

"Sunshine?"

"Well—poteen. Would you like a *doch an dorroch*, out of it? We can understand that, though Bingham and these English fellows don't, or pretend they don't."

The light-hearted banter of the majority contrasted strongly with the gravity, even unconcealed sadness, of one or two of the married officers, particularly Joyce, who but a short time before, hand in hand with his wife, had lingered beside the bed where their two children lay fast asleep and nestling in each other's arms. As he kissed them softly, the poor man's tears had dropped upon their golden hair, and then he came forth to take his place at the head of his company; but their little cherub faces, though they haunted him for many a day and night, amid the sufferings of our army at Varna, and the perils of the Crimea, poor Joyce was fated never again to see.

And now, gnawing the brass chain of his cap, he stood on parade, tearless, but with his eyes bent wistfully on the window of the room where his children slept, and from whence their mother was watching him. He kissed his hand to her and even tried to smile, so true it is, that in the wealth of our emotions, at times we can give nothing.

Many of the married soldiers were in the same predicament, and the sobbing of the women became at times painfully audible, as they stole forward into the ranks, and held up their children to be kissed by the father who was too probably leaving them for ever; for before Sebastopol whole companies perished, and were renewed but to perish again. "Soldiers have hearts like other men, and they share the lot of other men," says Florence Marryat. They love and leave and lose occasionally, and occasionally also they have a soft spot left wherein to keep the memory of such things; for the military profession and a careless roving life, do not necessarily render men dead to human feeling.

How often do we hear the contemptuous or careless remark, "*he is only a private soldier*;" but, thank God! our private soldiers are generally made of better stuff than those who seek to sneer at them, and no nobler or finer army ever left the British Isles, than that which landed under Lord Raglan on the shore of Bulgaria; and the letters that came from its humblest members, the mere voices from the ranks, with which the newspapers of the day soon teemed, formed a splendid example of epistolary literature, displaying inherent manliness strong

affection and fearlessness, resignation and hope ; high moral and religious principles, together with a singularly graphic power for describing all they saw and felt.

"Gentlemen and soldiers of the Royal Fusileers," cried Sir Edward Elton, when the officers had fallen in, and he wheeled the battalion into line ; "prior to this we have all been soldiers but in name. Now the day is coming—nay, it *has* come—when we shall be soldiers in stern earnest, with battles to fight and glory to gain. Though nine hundred strong, we are *one* in heart, my lads—one in heart, officers and men—and ready to face anything. We are of various ages—your captains and field-officers being senior in years to most of you. Half a century hence, how many of us shall be alive ? A whole century, and as surely as the sun now shines the grass will be growing over us all ; but the deeds we shall achieve must be borne on the pages of history and live for centuries after us. So comrades, while shoulder to shoulder, let us be all as brothers, and never forget that we must be ready to die with honour to the Queen we serve, and the country which gave us birth !"

To this short, but remarkable address, the regiment responded by loud cheering, and began its march at the word of command.

"Flam off !" cried the tall Drum-major, flourishing his splendid staff (which was surmounted by the Horse of Hanover in massive silver), and using the old fashioned command now almost forgotten in the service ; then crash went the music of the brass band to the air of "The Girl I left behind me," while the deep, hoarse, but hearty hurrah that Englishmen can give so well, burst from the throats of the thousands of their comrades of other corps that were soon to follow, and who had assembled to watch the departure of the Fusileers. Cheering and waving their caps, they followed into the streets of Chatham.

Other troops, Infantry, Artillery, and Marines, were on the march that morning, and other bands were heard to break the stillness of the ambient air, as their music floated over the level fields of Kent, scaring the lark and the blackbird in the budding woodlands.

Soldiers always muster and march merrily, so even the usually grave faces of Singleton and Joyce looked bright on this eventful morning. Patrick Beamish, who was a "devil-may-care" sort of officer, and had contrived to get several Irishmen into his own company, struck up the popular marching song, and nearly eight hundred men, while waving their bearskin caps or brandishing their muskets, made the clear blue welkin ring to the merry chorus ;

"Though I bask beneath another's smile,
Her charms shall fail to bind me ;
For my heart flies back to Erin's isle,
And the girl I left behind me."

How many brave young hearts were bounding there with wild and vague ambition, with the hope of that which they could scarcely have explained! There was, of course, the stirring novelty of departure for foreign service, to engage in a great European War after forty years of peace, and a glow swelled up in every breast as the cheers, the songs, and the music loaded the morning air, reverberating with a thousand echoes in the streets of the town through which they marched. Even Conyers Singleton, we have said, seemed to feel this proud emotion keenly—he who had marched many a time to battle, and had heard given the orders of the pre-percussion times—"Gentlemen, uncase the colours—examine your *flints and priming*," and leaning with his hand on his horse's flank, he looked back with bright and glistering eyes on the marching column, the flushed faces, the black Fusileer caps, the sloped arms and the fixed bayonets that flashed so keenly in the sunshine.

Among the women who saw them march there was no enthusiasm, but there were commiseration and tears for all; for none, perhaps, more than the smooth-cheeked boy ensigns, like Pomfret, in their first red-coats; or the little drummers who beat so lustily in front of the column, and the half of whose whole height, seemed a tall bearskin cap.

By rail they were soon swept away to Southampton, and that evening saw them all stowed on board the *Victoria* transport ship, and "told off" to their berths; the muskets racked; the belts and knapsacks hung on their cleats; the messes formed, the quarter-guard on duty, and silence and order prevailing through all the crowded vessel, the result of discipline, strict obedience, and military etiquette.

By sunset, the *Victoria* had been towed by a steamer below Portsmouth, where through the evening haze, loomed the great modern tower of the church which forms a landmark from the sea, the forest of masts, and the long line of ultramural fortification extending along the beach to Southsea Castle. Now, her canvas was let fall and sheeted home; the tow-line was cast off, the last connecting link with dear Old England; a farewell cheer was exchanged; the steamer dipped her ensign thrice, and the great transport with its human freight stood upon her own pathway, with the high lands of the Isle of Wight upon her weather-bow gleaming white and pale in the cold lustre of the clear star-light; but the chalky Culver Cliffs, the Cove of Ventnor with all its pretty villas, and the Blackgang Chine, soon melted into the midnight sea as the transport bore down the channel before a spanking breeze.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE OLD, OLD STORY.

LADY WEDDERBURN'S fond desire that Gwenny should be married to Cyril was still uppermost in her mind, and ever present in her thought and day-dreams, though Cyril was far away and thinking now of other things—had, perhaps, almost forgotten his cousin's existence. Thus she viewed with extreme impatience the intimacy that was ripening fast between her wealthy niece and the penniless Horace Ramornie ; an intimacy which led her to fear that ere Cyril could return to Willowdean the love of the beautiful heiress, if he cared to win it, might be lost to him for ever.

In a farewell letter from Cyril, dated at Southampton, Lady Wedderburn had heard of the embarkation, and she already trembled at the idea of the many perils to come. The *Victoria* transport, with the Royal Fusileers, had sailed ; and the same newspaper which announced that circumstance contained an account of the destruction of the *Europe* troop-ship by fire, off Cape Finisterre, with a body of the 6th Dragoons on board, when the Colonel, so many of the men, and all the horses perished.

It has been already mentioned how love for Gwenny was dawning in the heart of Horace Ramornie ; how twice he had been upon the point of a declaration, but was restrained by an intuitive perception of his aunt's views. And though a secret passion was swelling up in his heart, fear of the family aims and wishes made him actually long for the expiry of his leave of absence, as a suitable excuse for quitting his uncle's house, where he had ever been welcome and always a favourite.

Gwenny was a sensitive creature ; one of those who shrink from the world's rougher touch. By nature she was all gentleness, sympathy, and enthusiasm. The blue waves rolling in light, and breaking in shining ripples on the sandy beach, or thundering in white foam on the bluff coast of the Merse, where the rocks are literally alive with wild sea-fowl ; the songs of the birds, so new a sound to her, as the birds of India are mostly voiceless ; the perfume of flowers, a novelty too, as the most gorgeous plants of the land she had left are scentless ; the balmy coolness of the spring days, the dark purple tint of the heather on the hills of Lammermuir ; the songs of the sturdy peasantry, so different in cadence from the monstrous polyglot rubbish of the dusky Hindoostanees—all served to fill her with joy and vague yearnings, in which Horace, her usual attendant or companion, was associated. For Robert Wedder-

burn, anticipating, perhaps, the day when he should have the field to himself, was usually, to all appearance, immersed in his studies.

Horace was master of all the legendary lore of the Merse. Thus, when with Gwenny, he enlivened many a solitary ride by the tales he told her—weird ones some of them—about the witches of Auchincraw, who became cats or crows, as suited their purpose; the terrible goblin known as the Bogle of Billymore, who devoured children like shrimps; of St. Mary of Coldingham, and the Skeleton Nun who was found built in the convent wall, and the last words in whose ears had been the awful three, *Vade in pacem*. And often they rode to the deep rocky ravine and the two abrupt hills, which form the famous foreland named St. Abb's Head, from whence they could see the coast of England, stretching in the distance far away.

There an undulation in the velvet turf, and a few gray stones lying one upon another, indicate where the convent church stood in an age that is now remote indeed; a low fence of sods, a few tufts of hemlock and wild nettles tossing in the keen sea-breeze show the old burial-ground, where the dust of the Pict, the Scot, and the Briton, mingle on the bleak verge of the giddy cliff, three hundred feet below which the ocean roars and boils, hurling the huge waves that have come unbroken from the Naze of Norway and the mouth of the Skager Rack.

There he would tell her how the church that had passed away, had been founded in gratitude to God, by the Saxon Princess Ebba (daughter of a Northumbrian prince), when escaping shipwreck there. And how, when the Danish rovers came, in the days of the Flame-bearer, the pious nuns, to save themselves from capture, cut off their own lips and noses; which made her think of some of the barbarous tales she had heard in India.

And often Horace paused in stories such as these, bewildered by the love that filled his heart and loaded his tongue, while he gazed into the soft, inquiring, or wondering eyes of Gwenny, or admired the graceful mode in which she sat her horse.

Horace knew well that it is not every woman who looks well on horseback; but a slender girl like Gwenny, whose spirits were light as ether, whose dark eyes were always sparkling, and whose complexion, if not brilliant, was clear, pale, and pure, looked a very Aurora in a plumed hat and riding-habit.

Those who love truly and tenderly, seem to have had no past, for love seems always a part of the present; thus Horace felt as if he had known Gwenny all his life, or rather to have begun a new existence by knowing her.

One day as they rode home together slowly, after having lingered at Wolf's Crag, and talked of Lucy Ashton and Edgar

of Ravenswood, as if they had been real characters, rather than the shadows of a romance—

"Thank God!" exclaimed Horace, suddenly, after a pause, "that this is my last week at Willowdean!"

"Why that exclamation?" she asked, with surprise.

"Because, Gwenny, I shall soon see the last day here of a love that is without—hope."

She made no further inquiry, but cast down her long lashes, for right well did Gwenny know that her young companion loved her. By one electric glance which once had passed between them, like a flash of light, she had learned it instinctively.

"Oh, Horace," said she, tremulously, though she seemed to have more courage in the matter than he. "How lonely will all these places seem to me when you are gone!"

"And how will it be with me, Gwenny, when a memory shall be all I have of you?"

The girl cast her dark eyes down again, and blushed and smiled.

"There is a poet, who says," continued Horace—

"How many meet who never yet have met,
To part too soon, but never to forget!"

So it is with you and me, Gwenny—with me, at least. Times there are when I almost wish we had never met; for never, never can I forget you, or the hours of delight we have spent together. Oh, Gwenny Wedderburn," he added, while checking her horse's bridle, and taking her hand in his own, "I love you—love you dearly; but—but, you are rich, and I so poor—and then our aunt——" He paused, and then resumed, while the girl trembled in her saddle, and was covered with confusion. "Gwenny, dare I hope that the distinction I trust to attain on service—such, at least, as may fall to the lot of a mere subaltern—may be a pledge to me—of—of—that if I live to return, I may claim your love as my reward—my recompense?"

"You have my love already, dear Horace—all that my heart can bestow," was the almost breathless response of Gwenny.

Their horses were side by side; so passing an arm around her, he drew her close to his breast, and kissed her brow and cheek. There was something wonderfully soft and loving, tender and respectful—mutely eloquent, in fact—in the manner in which Horace gathered the girl in his embrace, when words failed him, and Gwenny seemed to feel it as such. "No two declarations of love are alike, any more than two leaves on the same tree," says a writer who has had some experience in such pleasant matters. But it was thus that the great secret, which had trembled so long on the lips and in the heart of Horace Ramornie, was shared now by her whom it most concerned.

Long did they linger on their homeward ride, these two young lovers, reiterating the old, old story that has been said or sung by others so often, and will be so, till the end of time—how much they loved, and how unutterably dear they were to each other *now*!

"But what will Aunt Wedderburn say when she hears of our engagement?" said Gwenny, after a long pause, as they entered the shady avenue which led to the house of Willowdean.

"She will learn to hate me, I fear. And yet I am her sister's only son," said Horace, sadly.

"Hate you—why?"

"As yet we shall say nothing about it, Gwenny, love," replied Horace. "Ah, it is a pity you are so rich," he added. "People could not then talk as many do; our Aunt Wedderburn would not then deem me a fortune-hunter, and I could marry you at once, and take you away with me."

"To live on your lieutenant's pay, with a share of a barrack-room, a bungalow, or a tent! Oh, cousin Horace—Horace, darling, it is very romantic, but not to be thought of," said Gwenny, laughing.

"I have thought of it often in my day-dreams."

"Yes; but even the proverbial love in a cottage were better," she continued, looking down with a beautiful smile, and toying with her horse's mane.

"Aunt Wedderburn wishes you to marry Cyril."

"But Cyril never asked me, nor seemed to care for me, but as one to talk to and laugh with," said Gwenny, looking surprised.

"I feel that such is her wish, however; even Robert has hinted as much."

"But let us speak of ourselves," she exclaimed, as her eyes suddenly filled with tears; "oh, how long may this horrible war last?"

"It is scarcely begun, so far as we are concerned, but when once shots are exchanged, Heaven alone can tell the issue. However, I may not be away from you for more than a year—perhaps," he added, with a quivering lip, for he strove to speak hopefully, though his heart misgave him.

"A year? Good Heavens! a whole year!" exclaimed Gwenny, ponderingly.

"Yes, Gwenny: what is a year, at most?"

"It will be an eternity for us to look forward to, though it is so little to look *back* upon."

"True, my own Gwenny; and when I think of looking forward to a whole year,—twelve months, fifty-two weeks, three hundred and sixty-five days, with all their weary hours of separation——"

"And a year of such peril to you, it may be—of anxiety and terror and sorrow to me!"

"Oh, my darling—my beautiful darling, it is horrible to be separated so soon when we have just learned to love each other, and to find existence so dear and that love is so sweet!" said Horace, with a burst of tenderness, as he assisted her to alight, and would certainly have kissed her, but for the appearance of that solemn personage Asloane, the butler, between the pillars of the peristyle.

The future life of Horace Ramornie—the life of ambition and of military glory he had hoped to live—seemed to have passed from his mind and desires. He could imagine no scene and form no scheme for the long years to come, in which Gwenny was not concerned, and in which she did not bear a part. His ambition had evaporated, and with it, for the time, his military ardour, vanity of uniform, and the "pomp and circumstance of war" seemed to have faded sorely. The joys of the mess; the glitter of the military ballroom; the splendour of the parade; the perils of the field and the chance of being even a unit in the great game about to be played by Europe in the East, were all as nothing now, when contrasted with the charm of Gwenny's presence, her voice and her society.

Ideas of the life of splendour and display he might spend with a beautiful girl possessed of such wealth as Gwendoleyne Wedderburn, never occurred even once to single-hearted Horace. He was too young, too impassioned, too genuine in heart and impulse to be mercenary, or to love the orphan-heiress for anything save herself alone.

He felt that he could almost without a pang relinquish his old world of hope, for she had become a new world to him.

But his sword was his sole inheritance, and now duty and honour alike combined to separate them; yet as the few remaining days of his leave of absence flew past, the happy consciousness of mutual love grew stronger between him and Gwenny; though the hour of his imperative departure was viewed with an apprehension that was mixed with sadness—an intense sadness, that was all the more keen that they were compelled to conceal it from the searching eyes of Lady Wedderburn.

"If poor Horace has nothing but his pay as a lieutenant, and I love him so, why should we not be married?" thought Gwenny; "surely I have wealth enough for two—even for a dozen. Horace is a dependant, I have heard Aunt say; but what of that? Who that love as *we* do, care for riches!"

And as she thought thus, a grand scorn for wealth curled the beautiful lip of the little proprietrix of three hundred thousand pounds in gold mohurs and rupees.

"It would be hard indeed to marry only to please Aunt Wedderburn, when I should much rather do so to please myself and dear Horace."

But that was not the time for marrying or giving in marriage. They had to content themselves by a solemn ratification of their engagement—an exchange of rings, of locks of hair and photographs—a long, long stolen embrace amid the flowers of the conservatory, and then the hour came when they were to part, to all appearance as merely affectionate friends; when they had that task to perform which is so difficult to those who are unused to the world, and are young and love tenderly—to veil their secret emotions, to smile when they would weep; when each had to conceal their great grief at parting with the other, while their passion was so new and keen in their sensitive and impulsive hearts.

But the fatal hour came, and as the carriage rolled away through the avenue with Horace just as it had done with Cyril, Gwenny felt with a sobbing emotion in her throat, and a suffocating sensation at her heart, as if the sun of her existence had set at Willowdean, and she never knew till then how much she loved him.

To her, his departure seemed the breaking of a spell—the mockery of a dreamy fancy, till ultimately his vacant place at table and in the house generally, served to bring the truth home to her, that he was gone, gone perhaps for ever—Horace so loving in manner, so gentle in voice and eye—and then the tide of sorrow welled up in the girl's heart, all the more that she had none with whom to share her secret.

The memories and visions of love remained with her; but they were visions and memories only.

Meanwhile, Horace felt sensibly that, save with Gwenny, there had been far less fuss and *empressement* about his departure, than that of Cyril Wedderburn; and poor little Miss Flora M'Caw was the only one who gave free vent to her tears, which were always ready for service on a suitable occasion.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

DARK DAYS.

"WELL, thank Heaven, they are separated at last!" was Lady Wedderburn's mental congratulation, as she saw, but not without emotions of pity and suspicion mingled, the pale girl—her soul wrung with uncontrollable anguish—retire to her own room after the departure of Horace; but she knew not how inex-

pressibly dear they had become to each other, by that very separation.

In oppressive dulness the weeks succeeded each other now, for as the family were in mourning still for Uncle Wedderburn, the visitors were fewer than usual at Willowdean; and it was not until the fourth or fifth day, and when a letter arrived, dated at Chatham Barracks from Horace and addressed to his aunt, that Gwenny realized to the full the fact of his absence.

"Horace gone," thought she; "Horace (like Scot's 'Quentin Blane') so gentle-voiced and gentle-eyed, who looked like one whom all the world had frowned on, oh! what a dreary void, what a blank her life would be now! There were no more drives, or walks, or rides together; no more reading together, and no more sweet companionship."

But Horace, she knew, would be sad, even as she was herself; and who could comfort him? and who fill her place?

And the confidence and innocent truth of her own heart told her—*none!*

How happily the past three months had fled! Oh! how she missed him, and wept and sorrowed in secret for his absence from a house where no one seemed particularly to care for him; for Robert Wedderburn was cold and selfish, hence perhaps his legal predilections; Sir John was incessantly occupied by all the cares that take up the time of a sporting country gentleman; by politics, county meetings, and the internal affairs of the little burgh of Willowdean, where he was viewed as a species of potentate, even by the ministers of the three Presbyterian denominations who had churches there and Christian hearers who hated each other most cordially. As for Lady Wedderburn, she had special views and wishes, that made her approve of Horace being away, though he was soon to be face to face with death and suffering.

The piano Gwenny would touch no more, for the music so powerfully reminded her of his presence and voice, as to give her absolute pain. Her worsted work, her embroidery, her flowers and the birds she had brought from India, had all become distasteful to her; and so were her books, though these were full of passages he had marked, poor boy—for he was not much more than a boy after all; and fast fell her tears as she re-read them.

"Alone—alone! oh, I am now so much alone!" she would say.

Her engagement-ring, which, curiously enough, escaped Lady Wedderburn's attention among the others that glittered on Gwenny's white fingers, and which had cost poor Horace a couple of months' pay, she was never weary of looking at, during the first few weeks of their separation; even as another sad girl

was looking at her plainer—but equally, or perhaps more beloved hoop, which from its form was emblematic of something more than a mere betrothal ring.

In her separation Gwenny had no wound to her self-love, such as that which tortured the heart of Mary Lennox; the consciousness that one of whose whole soul and thoughts she had been empress, to whom her least word was law, her smiles and glances happiness, had cast off his allegiance, was neglecting and ignoring her, and seeking to forget her as one who would disgrace him.

The joy and excitement of Gwendoleyne when letters came from Horace, and her normal condition of sadness, were alike ignored by Lady Wedderburn, though the latter was viewed with some concern by good-natured, but unthinking Sir John.

"Well, Gwenny, my summer blossom, why so sad? Thinking of your Indian home and poor papa—eh?" he would ask at times, and suppose that such were her thoughts as he received no direct reply; and then his handsome sunburned hand would caress her dark hair, which was always dressed to perfection by the skilful fingers of her ayah Zillah, the Madrassee; but she wore fewer ornaments now, for there was no one at Willowdean whose eye she cared to please.

And so the summer months stole on.

Horace was as yet at crowded and bustling Chatham, where the drills and duties were hard and incessant; and unremitting too were the departure of troops for the East, amid the cheers of the people, the crash of music, and the clangour of bells; and he knew that the time for him to go must arrive soon, for the grim fever king was thinning fast the ranks of his regiment at Varna. But never before had Horace seemed in such an affectionate mood to his aunt, and never had he written to her so many letters, so that at times she had, most unwillingly, to depute "the task" of answering them to Gwenny, the first sight of whose handwriting made Horace start as if electrified when he received a letter in Chatham barrackyard.

"Dear Aunt Wedderburn has desired me to write in her place; she has one of her nervous headaches to-day, and neither Dr. Squills, nor Miss M'Caw, with Rimmel, can make anything of her."

He could read no further, for now the bugle sounded; but Gwenny's presence seemed beside him—Gwenny in her innocent love and artless girlhood—and he became so bewildered, that as the exasperated adjutant said, "he made a mull of the whole day's drill by his blunders, by twice marching a camp colour through the centre of his company, and repeatedly throwing the whole line out!"

Attended by an old groom, Gwenny often rode to the places she and Horace had visited, and his stories of the quaint old

world that was past, came back to her memory with many a sweet and pleasant association ; but how dull, how lonely and valueless seemed all those places now, for he whose presence had shed a charm over them, was no longer by her side.

The evening sun setting in gold and amber clouds beyond the purple ridges of the Lammermuirs ; the beautiful flowers in the garden, even those he and she had planted (the seedlings "from dear papa's house in the Choultry"), expanding under the summer warmth ; the rippling grass, the growing corn on the upland slopes, the green waves breaking in surf on the rocky shore, were all alike gloomy and discordant, for Horace was not there, and never more might be, the most terrible reflection of all ! Had she but known the solitary Mary Lennox, what delightful companions they would have been, with their community of thought and wishes ; for though their positions in fortune were widely different, their hopes were one.

Arrangements had been made to join Lady Ernescleugh in London during the season ; but now Lady Wedderburn, on hearing, from Cyril's letters and the public prints, of the disease and horrors by which, through the utter inertia of the Ministry, our splendid army was literally withering away at Varna, shrunk from the idea of leaving Willowdean for a house in town and entering into gaiety, so the family remained at home.

Though it has been truly written that "three months of a London season teach us more than six months in the country," Lady Wedderburn had no desire that her niece's mind should become so much enlightened : so even the mixed and melancholly gaieties of Edinburgh were eschewed, and young gentlemen visitors by no means encouraged. So the girl would sigh with utter weariness when visitors came who talked only of crops and cattle, or the county pack ; or when the Reverend Mr. M'Guffog paid a solemn and fussy visit, for then the conversation ran entirely on matters clerical. And thus Gwenny learned for the first time that there was a Scottish Established Church, a Dissenting Episcopal Church with bishops, a Free Kirk which had none, and other roads to heaven without number ; and she heard of petty squabbles about religious forms, if the utter absence of any could be so called. The pharisees seemed the most powerful sect of all ; and she would listen in vacant wonder to the discussion of affairs that seemed as incomprehensible as the difference between Parsees and Hindoos, Brahmins, Bheels and Khonds ; but much less picturesque.

Summer we have said had come ; the scarlet poppies and blue cornflowers studding the golden fields of the Home Farm, pleased the eyes of Gwenny more than those of Sir John, who viewed them as weeds, and a bore ; and Lady Wedderburn sighed when she thought of all that might happen, and all

her eldest son must face before that corn was reaped and ground, for it was evident that our army would soon take the field, and be where hard knocks were going, as the Ministry, with a stupidity, if not worse, that has few parallels in history, was only waiting for *winter* to commence the Russian campaign.

Once, peace and war had only been empty words to many a heart and household; but they had a terrible significance now.

The Turks had compelled the Russians to raise the siege of Silistria, and driven them across the Danube; our ships of war had destroyed the batteries of Sulina, a Bessarabian village at the mouth of that river; the battle of Bayazid was fought in Armenia; Bomarsund, in the Baltic, had been bombarded by land and sea, and utterly destroyed by old Sir Charles Napier; and now many new and barbarous names of places almost never heard of before became at every table and fireside at home in Great Britain familiar in the mouths of all "as household words;" and even Lady Ernescleugh wrote Lady Wedderburn, to announce that, with some friends, she was actually thinking of going to Constantinople in Everard's yacht.

"My friend Lord Cardigan's yacht has already sailed; would you care to join us?" she added; and then followed a catalogue of many events of the London season: the debts and difficulties of some, the flirtations, matches, and jiltings of others—threatened duels, for that fashion of adjusting disputes had barely gone out.

"What if Cyril saw Gwenny now, or after the lapse of some months?" thought Lady Wedderburn. "Yes we shall go; and perhaps I may get leave for him to come back with me on 'urgent private affairs,' as so many contrive to do now. Yes—yes, I must bring my dear boy away from that odious place before the fighting begins with us."

But Sir John was opposed to the scheme as eccentric, and so far as regarded Cyril, incompatible with honour. The yacht required complete refitting, and the plans of Lady Ernescleugh were delayed for a time.

Though an active and obstinate opponent of Lord Aberdeen's government, and one who mistrusted him personally and as a minister, Sir John gave a large dinner party to a few neighbours and local notabilities, on news coming of the surrender of Bomarsund to Napier and General Baraguay d'Hilliers, when two thousand two hundred Russians were taken prisoners; and to his guests he bitterly reviled the Ministry for their delays and utter mismanagement of the war, and the mode by which, through their previous reductions and retrenchments, they had crippled our power by land and sea, so that our very arsenals could scarcely furnish shot for the first siege trains, while the entrenching tools issued to the troops had been condemned as

worthless by the Duke of Wellington in Spain forty-three years before; and in conclusion, he quoted that fine sentence of Sir William Napier, whose words are terrible in their significance and truth. "In the beginning of each war, England has to seek in blood the knowledge necessary to insure success, and, like the fiend's progress towards Eden, her conquering course is through chaos, followed by Death!"*

"Sae that evil-minded ne'er-do-weel, Chesters o' Chesterhaugh, has gone to help the Turks in person," said the Baron-Bailie of Willowdean, who officiated as croupier; "think ye it is true news, Sir John?"

"Yes; he has been gazetted to a majority in the Turkish contingent," replied Sir John, laughing.

"A major o' Bashi Bozooks, whatever they be!" said the Reverend Mr. McGuffog, lifting up his dreary eyes; "the Lord be good to us!"

"It's just what we micht hae expected o' siccan a loon, sirs," resumed the irate bailie, who, being a grocer and general dealer, ranked heavily as a creditor against Chesters; "he's mair a Turk than a Christian by nature, and will find himsel' quite at hame amang their harem-scarems, I warrant."

The mention of Chesters' name by a direct association of ideas caused a reference to be made to the decayed Laird of Lonewoodlee, and the *esclandre* concerning his pretty daughter.

Sir John, his son, and several gentlemen who were present, were disposed to express their disbelief of the matter, or their hopes at least, that the Master of Ernescleugh had been mistaken on the night in question; but the Baron-Bailie, who was a strict Sabbatarian, and vehement expounder in public on religion and morality, and who naturally took the worst views of human nature, maintained that "the young leddy had doubtless gude reasons o' her ain for her mysterious visits to such a man; and evil or no evil, there was aye some water found where the stirkie droons," a Scottish proverb which is supposed to infer a vast deal more than one may dare to say; and as she listened, again in her heart did Lady Wedderburn congratulate herself on the escape of her eldest son "from the snares of that designing girl."

Singularly enough, the next day was to behold somewhat of a change in her views regarding Mary Lennox.

Just as she and Gwenny were setting forth in the basket-phaeton which was drawn by a pretty pair of Orkney ponies, for a drive as far as the town of Greenlaw, a man whose face seemed not unfamiliar, approached, and respectfully lifting his bonnet, craved a few words "with her Ladyship."

* "History of the Peninsular War."

"I think I know your face," said she, pausing, whip in hand, and bowing pleasantly to encourage him.

"I am Tony Heron, my lady, a gate-keeper at Chesterhaugh."

"Well, Tony, what can I do for you?"

"Much, madam, if you are but willing, and a' in the Merse ken how kind you are to the poor. I have a wife and five wee bairns that can neither work nor want. They are a' thrown on my hands, which are empty, for the Mansion House is you know shut up; Chesters has gone to the wars; the servants are all dismissed, and I have got notice to quit too, from Grub and Wylie, the writers."

"Poor man!" said Gwenny, beginning to open her purse; but Lady Wedderburn checked her, for the man, who saw she had mistaken his intended appeal, blushed scarlet and drew back.

"You want employment, I presume?"

"Just so, my lady; and if you or Sir John could find me something to do about Willowdean, to put a little bread into the bairns' mouths, I'd be beholden to you for life. I have been twenty years in service, and have a good character."

"But from a bad master."

"I was servant to the good laird his father, before him."

"I fear you may find it a poor recommendation to Sir John having been at Chesterhaugh."

"So I hear on all hands now," said the other, with a sigh of bitterness; "but no man can say a word derogatory to the character of Tony Heron."

"Well, I shall speak to Sir John and the ground bailie, and do what I can for you, Tony, were it but for the children's sake."

The man's eyes kindled with gratitude; but he was not profuse in thanks; for Scotchmen, reserved at all times, seldom are so. Suddenly, checking her ponies again, Lady Wedderburn asked—

"Were you the gate-keeper who was cognisant of the visits Miss Lennox paid your bachelor master?"

"Miss Lennox never visited my master," replied the man with a glance of genuine surprise.

"But you must have heard it said that she did?" continued Lady Wedderburn, looking astonished in turn.

"I have heard, my lady, what a' the country-side has been ringing wi'; but Miss Lennox was never, to my knowledge, at Chesterhaugh save once, and then she came to visit *me*."

"You—about what—or for what reason?"

"She came in the evening, about the sunset time, to make some inquiry anent the terrible night when Mr. Cyril—that is, Captain Wedderburn—went amissing; to ask me the hour he left—if his horse was restive, and so forth?"

"What interest could *she* possibly have in the matter?" asked

Lady Wedderburn, rather haughtily, and with a heightened colour.

"Interest, my lady! Through a' the Lammermuirs, secret as they thought it, it was well kent that they loved each other well and truly, till some quarrel came between them. Just as she was asking me all about the captain, poor thing, her heart seeming to be in her mouth the while, the master lured her inside the gate, and then the storm of hail and snow came suddenly on. She wished to take shelter in my lodge; but the master would not hear of it, and half led, half pulled her into the house, where he kept her till midnight, as his hellicate groom, Billy Trayner, told us, by pretending that the springs of his waggonette were broken; and that is the whole story, my lady; and if I have told you a word that is untrue, may my puir bairns lack the bread I'm seeking to win them!"

"Why did you not state this before?" asked Lady Wedderburn, angrily.

"To whom, my lady? Besides, it was not my place or interest to speak against my master."

"True," she replied, and a keen emotion of remorse inspired her, as she now saw that the poor girl in her love for Cyril—artful though it might be—and her burning anxiety to learn tidings of him, after that terrible night and time of suspense and dread, had permitted herself to be lured into the false position we have so fully described elsewhere, and which was so destructive to her peace of mind and place in society.

"Call again to-morrow, Tony, and I shall see what can be done for you. Meanwhile," she added, turning to Gwenny, "we must call openly on Miss Lennox, and see if we cannot in some measure repair the serious injury that has been done her."

"I don't think she will see you, my lady," said Tony Heron.

"Not see me—why?" she asked haughtily.

"Because as I passed the tower gate this morning, I heard the women lamenting, for the Laird of Lonewoodlee had died in the night; and he is the last of the auld Lennox line, my lady," added the man, with an emotion of respect.

Lady Wedderburn, to do her justice, was inexpressibly shocked and grieved when she heard of this, notwithstanding all the old quarrels and coolnesses in the past time. She relinquished her idea of driving, and sent Gervase Asloane with cards of condolence; and she even in the first emotion of generosity wrote to Cyril on the subject; but he never got her letter (as she was pleased to think, on after-thoughts), for the mail steamer by which it went was cast away in the Gulf of Salonica.

And, though she knew it not, times there were when Cyril's thoughts flashed home, quicker than the electric wire could

have brought them : when he sat in his tent at Varna, gazing listlessly out upon the flat shore, the vast blue semicircular bay, and the hideous, gloomy, and dilapidated Bulgarian town, while his heart grew filled with irritating doubts and vague regrets, and with the mournful image of his lost Mary. Was she indeed false, as had been represented, and with Rooke Chesters of all men? Had she forgotten him? Had separation and time effaced his memory from her heart? Was he now as one she had never known and never cared for?

"Well, well," he would think, "a few more weeks must see me at Eupatoria, and a Russian bullet may solve all my doubts and difficulties."

But we are somewhat anticipating the regular progress of our story.

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE SHADOWY HAND AT LONEWOODLEE.

DURING all this time that the summer had been verging towards autumn, and the corn yellowing on lea and upland, Mary Lennox had been unremitting as usual, in the lonely task of tending her father's sick-bed.

She had only heard incidentally of Cyril's departure for the seat of war—that he had gone without a word of kindness or farewell to her who loved him as her own soul and more ; and for a time, that soul had seemed to die within her.

Her betrothal ring was a fond link—a species of sentimental fetter—from which she had no wish to free herself, otherwise she might have drawn it from her finger and cast it in the fire !

The first time that Cyril had called her Mary—her Christian name—still dwelt in her memory with exquisite tenderness, from the very novelty of the circumstance. The *last* time he had called her Mary, dwelt in her memory too ; but with anguish, for then it had been uttered in a tone of wrath, of sorrow and upbraiding.

Music was the great solace of old Oliver Lennox's lonely days. He loved to hear the rich and glorious voice of his daughter, and thus, for many an hour she played and sung to him, while her heart was full, nigh unto bursting, with thoughts that would not be repressed.

Like an angel of mercy had poor Mary hovered about that sick-bed, where her only tie to earth was about to be severed ; for at last there came a day, she was never to forget, when the doctor assured her that all his skill could "protract life no longer, and that ere nightfall, too probably, all would be over ;"

and Mary heard him without tears, for now they would not flow ; but the old anxious and clamorous sensation about her heart, became replaced by a gnawing concentrated agony too keen for description ; and as she listened to the fatal words of Doctor Squills, felt the kind pressure of his hand and heard his steps die away as he left the house, she gazed in a kind of stupor across the landscape, where the setting sun shone so warmly, and, it seemed, so mockingly, in his summer splendour, on the green pasture lands, and on the trees where the birds were singing so merrily, while through the open windows the hum of the mountain bee, and sweet perfume of the honeysuckle came together.

"Must it be—must it be—at last—at *last* !" she murmured through her clenched teeth ; and creeping once more to his side, she kissed her father's brow and caressed his silvery locks, that were now as thin and fine as floss-silk ; and as she did so, there flashed on her memory the old tradition that "a grey head was ne'er kamit" (*i.e.*, combed) by a Lennox of Lonewoodlee, for in domestic brawls or foreign wars, they all perished early ; but the manners were changed for the better now.

For a time he seemed unconscious of her presence, and spoke only of her dead brother.

"Oh, my Harry," he murmured, "your mother was in her grave, and never knew how gallantly you led your squadron on that terrible day against the Sikhs."

"Mamma is in Heaven, and oh, papa, may know it all !" whispered Mary.

Then suddenly a light seemed to penetrate the darkness of his mind ; he recognised her, and drew her close to his breast in a tremulous embrace.

"Mary, my own little Mary," said he in low and laboured accents, "the bitterness of death is not in dying, but in leaving you without a home—without a friend—for all passes away with me."

"God will guard and guide me, papa !"

"Our past, with all its traditions and history, has been an honourable past ; yet we Lennoxes have been going down in the world—*down* so surely as I shall go to my grave—my poor child !"

After a long pause he spoke again ; but more feebly.

"Play me something, Mary, while I can yet listen ; for the music soothes me into dreams and fills me with prayerful thoughts ; play to me once again, Mary," he added with a smile that made her heart sicken, for it was the last flash up of the dying light, ere that light went out for ever !

Mary seated herself at the piano in the adjoining room, and while tears streamed over her face, and her tremulous hands

could barely touch the keys in accompaniment, she slowly sung two verses of a hymn :—

“ Gentle Jesus, look with pity
From Thy great white throne above ;
All the night my heart is wakeful
In Thy sacrament of love.
Shades of evening fast are falling,
Day is fading into gloom ;
So when shades of death fall round us,
Lead thine exiled children home.”

For a time the old man had beat feebly with his fingers on the coverlet ; then all motion ceased, and when Mary stole in, a cry escaped her, and she sank on her knees, burying her face in the bedclothes.

The day had indeed faded into gloom ; the old man had passed away to the foot of the Great White Throne ; and, a terrible reality, the unseen, yet shadowy hand was resting on Lonewoodlee.

* * * * *

There were now silence and utter desolation in that sequestered tower among the moorlands. The blinds were drawn down ; old and dingy blinds they were, making the deeply set windows look more gloomy in the walls which were of such strength and thickness.

Alison Home, after the first noisy explosion of her grief, when she uttered spasmodic sobs, and rocked herself to and fro before the kitchen fire, moved about stealthily and softly in list shoes, as if fearing still to disturb the old Laird, who died where so many of his forefathers had lain, and where many of their brides had slept.

The stillness, the solemn hush of death were over all, and nowhere more than in the desolate heart of Mary. Everything connected with such an event in Scotland is so grim, so stern, so funereal, and utterly without aught to alleviate the mind of the survivor, that it becomes harrowing in the extreme. There are no prayers for the dead ; no pretty offices, such as the decoration of the body with flowers : no service of any kind is performed beside it, so that the living may linger near in a labour of love to the last. A white sheet is simply spread over to hide it, and then the body is left to stiffen into ghastly rigidity of outline.

And this death had not come unaccompanied by omens ; the watch-dog had moaned painfully all the preceding night ; and Alison Home, and the other domestic, had of course heard the dead-bells tinkling in their ears, according to the peasant superstition in the old ballad :—

“Yestreen I heard the death-bell sound,
When a’ were fast asleep;
And aye it rung, and aye it sung,
Till a’ my flesh did creep.”

Though in days and months past, Mary had orton, in anticipating the present terrible contingency, thought of her own future, she forgot all about it now. She had even ceased to think of Cyril Wedderburn till his mother’s card came, and a bitter smile crossed the girl’s pale face as she placed it on the table, where lay an open letter from Messrs. Grub and Wylie, the solicitors, “threatening legal proceedings anent the bill handed to us by our client Captain Chesters of Chesterhaugh.”

It might safely lie on the table unheeded *now*!

Mary Lennox was indeed alone! Sorrow-stricken as she was, there was not on all the earth a being who could share her terrible emotion of grief. She had no friend nigh to soothe her awful loneliness by a single word that was not so conventional as to be repellant. She had no home, no house, no shelter now from the too probable want that must soon overtake her!

Dark and cheerless indeed was the prospect of the bereaved girl; there was affliction and agony for the present, with vague terror of the future. No hand was near to caress, and no voice to soothe her, as she lay weeping on her bed, sleepless and without rest, though prostrate from over-wrought emotion. There was something terrible in the desolation of that young heart, thrust back upon itself, even in its craving for sympathy. She had not even that relief afforded to sorrow by having around her friends to whom she might speak of the dead, and hear his real or imagined virtues extolled, remembered, and descanted on.

The two old female servants sat cowering by the kitchen fire, talking in low whispers of the Shadowy Hand on the wall, and wondering if it was visible now; but then there was no moon. According to an old custom, or superstition, they had covered up with white every piece of furniture the chamber of death contained, and then the door thereof was carefully closed, for in rural districts the people fear the dead may speak if it is left ajar, though the whistle of the locomotive is fast banishing all such foolish fancies.

The minister of Willowdean, a cold and somewhat pompous personage, came on the morrow, and his extempore prayer—one stereotyped in his mind, having been delivered on a thousand similar occasions—though hard and unsympathetic, and most jarringly intoned, soothed her a little, because his meaning was good, and he wished to be kind apparently. The Reverend Gideon M’Guffog was a burly, hard-featured and sandy-whiskered Galwegian, who seemed more like something between a bluff grazier and a sleek attorney, than a clergyman.

At the close of his prayer, which he delivered with his eyes shut, he glanced with surprise at the open piano, on which the music Mary had last used was yet remaining neglected or forgotten.

"Music," said he, in a tone of reprehensive inquiry, while glancing at Mary, under, over, and finally through his spectacles.

"It is the hymn I sang to my darling papa last night; he loved it so, next to *Adeste fideles*, indeed; and it was while I was singing it, he passed away from me," said Mary in a choking voice.

The measure of the Reverend Gideon's reprehension became full when he read over the hymn in question.

"It is ritualistic, even popish in spirit, Miss Lennox, and I deplore that the last sounds heard on earth by the ears of your esteemed father, were such as these. But oh, let not me bruise the bruised! My poor young lady, this sort of thing comes of your being so sadly left to yourself."

He retired, promising to call again. But nothing that he could say had the effect of crushing Mary's spirit lower, though she felt that in life or in death she had nothing to reproach herself with as a daughter.

As he was in haste to address a meeting of the Sabbatarians and self-righteous folks of Willowdean, who were getting up a petition to the Home Office to prevent the working men of Edinburgh from entering the Botanical Gardens of that city "on the Lord's Day," and indulging in the desecration of it by enjoying flowers and sunshine, he hurried away; but permitted his wife, who had latterly ignored Mary's existence (at least since the Chesterhaugh story), to remain with her, till the funeral matters were arranged. This was but an act of Christian charity; and when it became known in the neighbourhood, that the impoverished Laird of Lonewoodlee was dead, many shook their heads regretfully, when remembering, like honest Sir John Wedderburn, his stately manners, his steady seat in the hunting field, his convivial qualities, his dignified, old-fashioned courtesy, his queer feudal notions; and all agreed that a link with the past was broken. A few others speculated on what would become of his beautiful orphan daughter.

The funeral day came at last, the great and final wrench to poor Mary, who was secluded in her own room, as men alone are present when "the Prayer" is given in Scotland; but she heard that Sir John Wedderburn and his youngest son were present in deep mourning, and she sobbed more heavily at the intelligence.

Cyril's father! Cyril's brother!

"Dead!—dead!" she would whisper in her heart. "How shall I struggle through the world alone? Who will love me now that my dearest papa is dead?"

So Oliver Lennox was buried in the Lennox aisle of Willowdean Kirk, where are lying the tombs of his race for three hundred years, back even to Oliver who built the Tower, as the legend above its door records. And with a face of due solemnity, specially got up for the occasion, his solicitor from Edinburgh acted as chief mourner; for neither kith nor kin had Oliver left to stand by his grave on that solemn day when the turf fell like a green curtain over the last scene of his history.

"Better in his narrow home than in the Tolbooth of Willowdean or Greenlaw; for it was coming to *that*, sir!" whispered his solicitor in the ear of Sir John Wedderburn, to whom, as a Baronet and man of property, he had stuck like a barnacle during the whole of the melancholy ceremony.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

A SURPRISE.

WHEN Oliver Lennox passed away, he left Mary little that she could call her own, save her paraphernalia and a few jewels that had been her mother's. Lonewoodlee had been sold piecemeal in times long past, and the little that remained was mortgaged to the turret-vanes. The spot of ground around it was mortgaged too, even to the last tree that grew thereon. There was the old furniture of the days of the Regency, now scarcely worth removal; there were some grim old portraits, by Ramsay and Aikman, and even two by Sir Peter Lely, which would sell readily to those who were "getting up" galleries of ancestors elsewhere. There were some old arms, even bits of armour that had seen service in the Border Wars; steel caps and jacks, and Jedwood axes; old cabinets, and eggshell china in the chintz-covered drawing-room; old books, old rods and guns, and whips; and many a household god, to which Mary's heart clung yearningly now that she knew she must leave them all behind her; for whichever way her eyes turned they fell on some object through which, by the mere association of ideas, she was tortured. But she strove to cast such thoughts aside, as she reflected on the littleness of life and the worthlessness of it—a bitter conclusion when formed by the heart of one so young, and when that heart should feel all the best impulses of hope in a joyous future, and in a long life of lasting happiness.

Had her father been more provident in his hot fox-hunting youth; had her brother, the lancer, contracted fewer debts of honour, her fate might, she knew, have been different now. But her father was dead, and Harry was dead—buried in his Indian grave, far, far away; so she crushed the thoughts that would upbraid them. Yet when taken in conjunction with her

broken engagement, and the whole details of her luckless love affair with Cyril Wedderburn, her heart

“Ached with thoughts of *all* that might have been,”

had her fortune and circumstances in life been more prosperous and suitable to her birth.

When the gloomy excitement of the funeral was past, and she came steadily to see the necessity for facing the future, she felt at times an irritation—an almost angry and defiant emotion at Destiny; while sharing with Alison Home the hope that “when things are at the worst, they are sure to mend—at least they couldna’ weel be waur.” But she knew that with her they must mend elsewhere than in her old ancestral home. And knowing that the Chesters’ story had caused her to be coldly and malevolently regarded in the neighbourhood, now she felt only the most intense longing to quit it, and for ever.

In the years of the future, if God spared her, when her name had been forgotten here, she might, if she choose, return again to see her father’s grave, and perhaps to erect a little monument over it. And so, thinking over these possibilities, pondering alone—for the minister’s wife had that day gone back to the Manse—Mary, seated in her modest black dress, gave herself up to thoughts that became most difficult to unravel. She leaned her head upon her right hand, and sat in the deep recess of one of the dining-room windows. She heard only the beating of her heart, save when the intense solitude that reigned around the old house was broken by the cawing of the black rooks in the ancient thicket—the *lone wood*—from which the Tower took its name, or the bleating of a sheep on the hillside close by.

A day was coming, she knew, when her eyes must rest on other lands and prospects than the old familiar view she saw from her window now; and never did the fields, laden with golden grain, or the green pasture meadows and the purple heather of the hills now bathed in the amber hues of sunset, look more lovely than in this her time of sorrow.

With all her anxiety to begone now, she dreaded the change. She was so young, and so totally ignorant of the world and all its crooked ways; the uprootal from old associations amid which she had lived from infancy; the risk of venturing among the cold, hard, suspicious, and perhaps unpitying strangers—more than all, of precipitating herself into a human wilderness so vast, and to her unknown, as that of London, appalled her—for to London she was bent on going! She felt herself little able to work, but alike ashamed and unable to beg! These, and such as these, were crushing thoughts to a tender girl in the sensitive time of youth, when all around her should be happiness and sunshine.

Her former friends and school companions now in London were, many of them, girls of good and high position. But in her change of circumstances she shrunk from intruding on any of them as a supplicant; and resolved that among strangers only should she look for work and bread.

So immersed was Mary in her own sad thoughts that she heard neither the sound of horses' hoofs, the rolling of wheels, nor the barking of the Dalmatian dogs; nor was she roused from her reverie till the startled Alison Home placed before her an old and well-worn silver salver, whereon lay two black-edged cards. Almost immediately after there was a rustling of silk and crape, as Lady Wedderburn and Gwendoleyne entered; and, being both in deep mourning, their appearance was most consonant to the occasion. Lady Wedderburn at once introduced herself, adding, "Miss Lennox—my niece, Miss Wedderburn."

A flush crossed Mary's pale face, and her quickened heart beat painfully as she rose to receive visitors who were entirely unexpected. But still, in the native pride of her heart, she strove to restrain her tears.

"Lady Wedderburn," said she, "it is most—most kind of you to come to me——"

"Surely not at a time like this, my dear child," replied Lady Wedderburn, seating herself on the deep old horse-hair sofa, and thinking how beautiful and how perfectly ladylike the pale girl looked in her black dress—an orphan in mourning for her father.

"Yes, at a time like this—the darkest of a blighted, a stricken life!" continued Mary, deeply moved by the soft and kind manner of her visitors.

"My son Cyril asked me to—to—;" poor Lady Wedderburn paused, conscious that she was beginning to blunder already.

"Cyril—Captain Wedderburn—did he——"

"Yes. He asked me to be kind to you if aught happened. You understand, Miss Lennox?"

Mary *did* understand, and she began to weep hysterically, while her visitors, unused to grief of this kind, glanced at each other uneasily.

The elder had ignored, slighted, even "cut" her. But could Mary forget that she was the mother of Cyril, who once loved her, and whose ring was yet on her engagement finger—Cyril, whom she still loved so well! Her heart was crushed by her own great grief: she felt weak and tender, and had the desperate longing in her utter and intense loneliness for some one to love her, for something to cling to. And she had now all the passionate desire to throw herself into the arms of Lady Wedderburn, as she might have done into those of a parent, and then

weep freely and fully, pouring out her sorrow ; but a remnant of family pride—the genuine old Scottish instinct, of not “letting oneself down,” sustained Mary’s spirit, and withheld the generous emotion which the other was too motherly and too kindhearted to have misunderstood.

She had admitted Cyril’s interest in Mary’s welfare, and she resolved to ignore that she knew or suspected more ; but somehow the conversation always turned to Cyril.

“I have now learned,—I think it right to tell you, my dear Miss Lennox—the true story of that visit you paid to the house—the gate, I mean—of Captain Chesters. I learned it quite incidentally,” she added, perceiving that a momentary flash of anger lit up Mary’s eyes ; “but I do think, as a friend, that it was most unfortunate for yourself that you concealed it so.”

“I concealed it, knowing the character of Captain Chesters, and in dread of the very event that took place.”

“And this event ?” asked the other, looking a little perplexed.

“Was your son’s just indignation at that which I had no control over ; indeed I had not,” replied Mary, referring thus to her engagement in the most straightforward manner, and not ill-pleased that the attractive eyes of the beautiful cousin were occupied by an album in the recess of a window.

“Control ?” stammered Lady Wedderburn, not knowing well what to say.

“Before that, he loved me very truly, madam.”

“For long ?”

“Almost ever since he brought my dear papa my brother’s sword and rings from India.”

“And you loved him ?”

“Yes,” replied Mary, in a low voice like a sigh.

“It is great duplicity on Cyril’s part, when he knew our families were on bad terms ; and *latterly*,” she added, with a glance at the unconscious Gwenny, “an unfortunate folly on yours, under all the circumstances.”

“You refer, madam, I presume, to the engagement with his cousin of which Captain Chesters told me ?”

Lady Wedderburn was silent ; and thus, unwittingly perhaps, permitted Mary to adopt a painful error.

“Well, well,” she sighed, looking sadly down the while ; “I can have no more bereavements now. My papa’s death leaves me alone in the world.”

“Alone ?”

“Yes ; God and myself only know how fearfully alone !”

“This is most sad,” replied Lady Wedderburn, kindly, as she took Mary’s hands in hers, and gazed tenderly into the sweet young face. “Can I not assist you, Miss Lennox ? In anything you may command me,” she added, for secretly her heart went

forth to the girl who had loved her absent son, and had the courage to honestly avow that love; so with charming inconsistency, forgetting all about her past accusation of art, of cunning, and decoying on Mary's part, with much of pity and sudden affection, she surveyed her; for Mary was so wasted and worn by past watching, nursing, and sorrow, that she was more like a spirit, having dark brown hair and large violet eyes, with bluish unhealthy circles under them, than a living being. "You do not seem strong, Miss Lennox," said she.

"Nor am I; my health may never recover the shocks I have sustained of late, with dear papa's long illness, and the hard task—a labour of love—watching him by night and day; so Dr. Squills tells me, that unless I am very careful, my grave is not far distant, and at best, assuredly not far off."

"Poor child! And what do you mean to do? Pardon me, but you cannot live here alone."

"Here!" repeated Mary, and as she glanced at the old faded dining-hall, the bitter smile stole over her lip again; "no, not here—not here. I mean to get some teaching if I can."

"And if not?"

"Then I can but—die!"

"Do not speak thus, I implore you!"

"My voice is thought to be a good one, and has been well cultivated, for papa was vain of it; but I fear I have lost a note or two since—since——"

"Since when?"

"Last March."

("That was when Cyril left this," thought Lady Wedderburn.)

"And you mean to go to London, I have heard; is that true?"

"Yes; in a few days."

"Have you friends there?"

"Not one."

"This is a terrible—a bleak prospect!"

"Bleak indeed; fatherless, motherless, and in time, it may be, penniless! But not hopeless, while God spares and helps me. Assuredly, Lady Wedderburn, this world is not the place where our fondest hopes are realized, or where our brightest dreams are always embodied. It is a place, rather, where we should bear and forbear one with another, striving to be happy if we can; and if we cannot be happy, to be at least resigned and content."

"My poor child, by living so much alone, you have learned to talk and think painfully beyond your years," replied the other, who could not help contrasting the probable fate, fortune, and future of Mary and Gweunny, both alike so young and beautiful.

Somehow her visit proved a very protracted one. She found

the charms of Mary's mind and manner were such, that even her loveliness seemed to be but a secondary excellence. She pressed her to visit Willowdean—to come away with her now in the carriage ; to spend even a single day there ; but Mary remembered her father's luckless and expensive quarrels and disputes with Sir John ; she thought, too, of the bitter slights and mortifications that had been put upon herself ; and now that all was over between her and Cyril, and that another possessed the love that had once been her own, she steadily declined, so her visitors ceased to press ; and all this seemed very strange to the blushing and simpering Mrs. M'Guffog, who had just returned, happy that she was in time to have an opportunity of even shaking hands "wi' her leddyship."

She prevailed upon Mary, however, to accept of a letter of introduction to a lady friend in London, who had two little daughters, and who, she was assured, would befriend her ; and for this, Mary felt herself compelled to express gratitude ; and there the interview, which afforded sincere pleasure to Mary, ended, and the splendid carriage, with its liveried servants and brace of spotted dogs, rolled away from the door of the desolate and dilapidated house.

When Gwenny, after kissing Mary and weeping with her at parting, in the mode adopted by most young ladies, who so readily share each other's joys and griefs—expatiated on the romantic solitude of the old tower, and the quaintness—so she was good-natured enough to term it—of its furniture and so forth, Lady Wedderburn reminded her that the Lennoxes were but as mushroom when compared to the old Welsh line of Ap-Rhys of Llanchillwydd ; but so she might, with a safer conscience, have added were the Wedderburns of Willowdean ; for so, even in this advanced age of the world, will some people talk, and set a mighty store upon their real or fancied little bit of heraldry, as if there had been more Adams than one in Eden.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

MARY BEGINS HER PILGRIMAGE.

WITH that promptitude which women can so often exert when in grief or adversity, Mary made all her preparations for leaving Lonewoodlee. It was already in the hands of creditors or their agents, and every day she remained she felt as if they were conferring an obligation upon her, and that idea was intolerable ! A few relics of her father she secured for herself. The embroidered slippers he had last worn—her own working ; his

spectacles, an old riding-whip, and other mementos, were put away as sacred treasures, over which she often wrung her poor little hands, and as the emotions of the child welled up in her heart, would weep—oh, so bitterly!

Mary had sometimes—especially latterly—repined at the dullness of her impoverished home; but now, with an emotion of repentance, she shed salt and silent tears, at the misery of leaving its shelter for a future which she could not foresee, and some dark forebodings of which had already begun to steal upon her.

The last day there was a dull and melancholy one indeed. A dense mist had set in from the German Sea, and was rolling in masses along all the glens and ravines of the Lammermuirs; the wind seemed to sigh with a deep “sough” in the old pine wood, and the old house-dog, as if sensible of some impending change or calamity, uttered ever and anon a low and dismal howl.

Mary was taking away with her only a trunk, for everything that had belonged to the family in past times, and all their most treasured household *lares*, were to be left behind for the hammer of the inexorable auctioneer. Jealously tender of her dead father's honour, Mary had changed into money everything in the shape of jewellery that the solicitors would permit her so to turn (for even the stony hearts of Grub and Wylie were moved); she had thus paid to the last penny all he owed in the neighbourhood; and leaving herself but a very little stock in gold—enough, perhaps, to maintain her for a few weeks, till she discovered some one to appreciate her musical talents and those little domestic accomplishments by which she hoped to feed herself in the great metropolis of the world.

So the fatal or eventful evening came at last, and Mary, with her little trunk, was driven over to the railway station by Doctor Squills, who, as he had always admired her greatly in secret, was somewhat moved on this occasion. As he turned the gig down the roadway from the hills, Mary begged of him to pause for a moment, while she gave a last long, wistful glance at Lone-woodlee, which—save that no smoke ascended from its chimneys now, and that all the windows were closed—looked just as it must have done for three centuries, a grey and stony mass, with its four turrets standing sharply up against the evening sky.

The little garden, once so trim and neat, was a mere wilderness now, where the jasmine grew in wild masses round the old lichen-spotted dial-stone; and the ancient pines of the thicket which her usually improvident father had spared for beauty's sake, and where she had been wont to meet Cyril, were marked by the axe for cutting down and “sale by public roup at the Market Cross of Willowdean,” as a large placard informed the passer.

There had been a time when she had pictured herself leaving Lonewoodlee—if she ever left it—as the bride of Cyril Wedderburn, happy, joyous, and filled with the natural anticipations of a long and brilliant future.—Now! tears choked her under her veil, as she felt keenly all the bitterness of the present, when contrasted with the vanished hopes of the past. It was all over—all—all; and certainly on this side of the grave they would never meet again.

"Drive on, Doctor, please; I fear we shall be late for the train—I am sure I hear the whistle already!" said she, making a prodigious effort to be calm.

In her motherly heart, Lady Wedderburn viewed with much of pity and more of terror, the fact of a solitary and beautiful girl, one so gently bred and nurtured and so totally ignorant of the world, setting forth on a pilgrimage so hazardous; while Sir John, with his usual open-handed liberality, thought of enclosing a cheque to her for a handsome sum, pretending it was some debt he owed her father; but his wife assured him that the spirit of Mary Lennox was such, that she would too probably return it as an insult; so the good man sighed as he relinquished the idea, adding—"Ah, poor thing—she was so fond of our Cyril, you say;" and he sighed again over his wine that evening, and said, "Kate, Kate, I cannot now, without regret and emotion, regard this utter destruction of an old Border family, with all its local and historical associations. Poor obstinate, passionate Oliver Lennox! I would, for the girl's sake, he had guided his patrimony as he might have done."

Lady Wedderburn agreed with him; but Robert thought "the sooner such geese as old Lennox were plucked and in the market, the better."

"There speaks the lawyer," retorted his father; "but poor Lennox knew one art only—that of squandering."

Meanwhile, Mary was standing as one in a dream on the platform of the little station at Willowdean, where the Reverend Gideon M'Guffog and a few others waited, either to see her off, or more likely to see the train come in, that event being then somewhat of a novelty in the secluded locality. He omitted to warn her, an inexperienced girl, of the perils that might so easily beset her path in a city so vast as London; but he did not fail to warn her to beware of "prelacy, popery, ritualism, and other errors and snares of the Evil One, abounding in the land to which she was going."

Sobbing bitterly as she bade her adieu, old Alison Home forced upon her acceptance a pair of worsted boots of her own knitting, "to keep her feetie warm in the train," as she said, though the season was the end of summer; and a tall footman in plush brought her from Willowdean a beautiful bouquet and a

pretty basket of fruit, with "the compliments and best wishes of Miss Wedderburn."

Her rival—her supplanter! yet she received the graceful gifts quietly, and returned a polite message of thanks.

To keep up appearances, she had taken a first-class ticket to Berwick, resolving to exchange there where she was unknown to a third-class for London, consoling herself by the reflection, that as an unprotected girl, she should doubtless be safer among the many, though more humble, who might be in the latter, than with one or two in the former class of carriage. And as the train glided away, Mary gave a last and piercing glance at the familiar scenery around her, at the village spire, whose shadow at sunset fell upon the grave of her parents, and then she sank back into a recess of the carriage, to weep and commune alone, with all her thoughts turned inwards.

Every tie between her and her home was broken now; and she had but one all-pervading idea, that on the day of her visit, Cyril's mother, by her *silence*, had tacitly admitted the fact of his engagement to his cousin Gwendoleyne.

"How soon, oh, how readily he forgot me!" she exclaimed, for she was alone.

Mary felt truly grateful to Lady Wedderburn for her letter of introduction, which was addressed to a Lady Wetherall in Piccadilly, and on the latter all her hopes were based. She wondered whether Piccadilly was a street or square—a park or suburb, and what manner of person Lady Wetherall might be—whether old or young, grave or gay. Would she be kind to her? oh, if so, how very soon she should learn to love her and her two little daughters. If the girls were her daughters, then *she* could not be very old—middle-aged, pleasant and motherly, perhaps; for now when alone, and entirely among strangers, Mary began to feel a little timid; she had heard and read so much of the unmerited humiliations of governess life.

She had changed carriages at Berwick; the waters of the bordering Tweed had vanished, and she strove, but in vain, to court sleep in the comfortless third-class vehicle, while the swift night train sped on in darkness along the bleak Northumbrian coast line, by Morpeth, and by Newcastle, the lights of which she saw with astonishment from the famous High-level Bridge; and as the train "slowed," then with growing fear and wonder did she look down on the quaint old bridge of the Tyne, on the pigmy figures in the gas-lit streets, and on the masts and yards of the shipping, more than one hundred and twenty feet below her!

So the monotonous night wore away, and weary, pale and nervous, with her black mourning dress powdered white with dust, she saw the train enter London, and run on for miles upon miles between dense streets, which being all of brick, seemed

strange and even foreign to her eyes, till she began to imagine it would never stop at all,—till about ten in the forenoon, when she found herself standing lost, bewildered, and literally stunned, amid the bustle and roar of the Great Northern Railway! But last night—only last night, she had been amid the sequestered solitude of the healthy Lammermuirs, where, save the bleating of a sheep or the whistle of a curlew, no sound broke the oppressive silence!

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

IN LONDON.

THE space, the crowd and the bustle in and around the terminus of the Great Northern Railway, scared poor Mary, and literally took her breath away. Wearily, and with a haggard and almost despairing eye, the girl threw up her black veil and looked about her. The train had disgorged its hundreds on the spacious platform; all seemed to have some decided object or path to pursue—some home or hotel to go to; nearly all seemed to have friends to greet them, were able to select their own luggage, and depart on their way in confidence and security.

"Now then, young lady—move on, please," said a policeman, and she moved on accordingly, but mechanically and forgetting all about the little trunk which contained all her worldly goods, till she suddenly saw it on a barrow, with many others, when she claimed it, and was instantly surrounded by clamorous porters, and even cabmen seeking her as a fare, and using strange slang terms of which she was totally ignorant.

"Where was she to be driven to?" some one asked her.

She could not say, but stood helpless and burst into tears. At that moment the guard of the train by which she had travelled—a ruddy complexioned, brown-whiskered, and jolly looking man—remembered that she was the young lady to whom the showily-liveried footman had brought the bouquet and fruit at Willowdean. He came forward and, touching his cap, politely said—"Can I do anything for you, ma'am—'seem a stranger in London—'been here before?"

"Never."

"Where do your friends live?"

"I have none in London."

"Then where would you like a cab to take you?" he continued.

"That I cannot tell you—I am so utterly a stranger."

The guard began to look puzzled, and a policeman who was standing by, and had hitherto been gazing stolidly over his

glazed leather stock, now seemed to take an interest in the conversation and to look suspicious, while one or two men of shabby appearance whispered together and drew near, till his eye fell on them, and then they slunk away.

"Do you know Lady Wetherall's house in Piccadilly?" asked Mary, timidly.

"I knows Piccadilly pretty well, ma'am—but can't say as I knows Lady Wetherall. Are you going there?"

"To-morrow—meantime I must rest for to-day and to-night; I am quite exhausted."

After a pause, the guard said, "I daresay my missus wouldn't object to taking you in for a night till you could look about you, and do it cheap too. She prefers Scotch folks—queer, but every one to their taste. If you choose to cab it, I'll go along with you myself."

"Is she your wife of whom you talk, my good man?" asked Mary, feeling the necessity of rousing herself to action, for the eyes of many loiterers were now upon her.

"Wife—no, my landlady—poor woman she has seen better days, has Mrs. Long Primer."

"Of course—who ever knowed a landlady that hadn't?" said the policeman, laughing.

"She's a respectable woman—a printer's widow, ma'am; and though her name be Long, she's little enough."

"Well, Tom," resumed the policeman, "I think you'd better take the young woman away with you; she may get into trouble else, being, I see, quite a stranger—a jolly green one too, sure as my name is Finnis."

This style of dialogue was Mary's first taste of a new kind of humiliation. The distribution of two or three three-penny pieces procured the cab, on the box of which her trunk was hoisted; she stepped in, and the guard, Tom Gubbs, in his railway livery, followed her. As they drove through the streets the double lines of vehicles of all kinds, laden carts, drays and waggons, the multitude of sounds that mingled and united into a species of dull roar; the vast and ceaseless human tide that surged along the pavements, at first appalled Mary, and then seemed to lull her senses into a kind of stupor, from which the voice of her new companion roused her at times, as he kindly named the thoroughfares through which they were passing, or drew her attention to some great church or other public edifice.

At last, after traversing what seemed to be an enormous wilderness of streets, the cab turned to the left from the crowded Strand, down a quiet and narrow alley, where all was still and nearly noiseless, and at the foot of which a glimpse could be had of the Thames, with its shipping, and the crowded steamers

gliding past. And now the vehicle stopped at the green-painted door of a large house, where people lodged on the various floors, according to what they could afford to pay. Then the guard, Mr. Tom Gubbs, after a chaffing wrangle with the cabby, who insisted that his fare should be five, instead of two shillings, informed her that this was "Norfolk Street, Strand." To Mary's ear this conveyed no particular idea, but to her eye the houses looked gloomy, dingy, and strange, and she could not determine whether they had been built yesterday, or two hundred years ago; though with their quaintly corniced doors, old fashioned brass knockers, and general aspect, they looked like mansions at which Johnson and Garrick might have visited, near which Savage might have wandered in his hunger and misery, and where crown bowls of punch had been drunk over the defeat of "The Rebels" at Culloden, and the fall of Quebec,—for the quarter seemed decidedly London of the Hanoverian times.

Mary's *introduceur*, whose apartment was at the top of the house, vouched to the landlady for the respectability of her "new visitor," who he said "had come from Scotland by the night-train, and was going to Lady Wetherall's in Piccadilly—to service of some kind, as he thought—to-morrow; but that she wished a few hours' rest, being well nigh wore out."

Indeed Mary looked as if about to sink, and when Mrs. Long Primer, a plump and motherly looking little woman in a huge white cap, asked her "on which floor she wished an apartment," she replied that it was a matter of total indifference to her; so the landlady solved the difficulty by conducting her at once to a little room, one window of which faced the gloomy street; but the other afforded a narrow glimpse of the shining river with all its bustle.

A little breakfast was prepared for her, and now Mary with a swelling and thankful heart, shook hands with Gubbs the guard (who, on the morrow, she knew, would be speeding past the Lammermuirs, with the down train), and the worthy fellow blushed scarlet, for it had not been often his lot to have in his hand so white and beautiful as that of Mary Lennox.

A reference to the London Directory assured Mrs. Primer that there was a Lady Wetherall in Piccadilly. The weight and appearance of Mary's trunk, as it stood in the passage, suggested respectability, and it was filled with genuine wearing apparel. Her courier bag too, with all its little appurtenances, seemed faultless. Mrs. Long Primer studied all these things acutely, for she had been deluded, "taken in," more than once during her career as a landlady; but in the course of conversation with Mary, she soon learned her circumstances, her object in coming to London, and all her wishes; and the good woman

felt her mother's heart stirred within her, as she surveyed the sad, weary eyes, the pale little face and the black dress of a creature so young and attractive cast on the world alone; and more sadly perhaps would she have surveyed her, had she known how very few pounds the poor girl had in her pocket.

Unslept though she had been all the previous night, Mary felt unnaturally wakeful all day. The street was still and quiet, though close to the roar of the mighty Strand. No sound came to her ears there, save an occasional street cry, the paddling of a steamer shooting past with its human freight, or the bell of St. Clement's church, as the clock struck the slowly passing hours. She prayed in her heart and felt hopeful, for she had made her first essay in life and met with kindness.

She studied the advertisements in the *Times*, and the number of situations vacant filled her with wonder. Could people ever be found to supply them all! On the other hand, the number of applicants, their talents, qualifications, and recommendations rather scared her, and made her happy to rest all her hopes on Lady Wetherall. Yet she could not resist turning again and again, nervously, to the monstrous list in the *Times*. There were, "Wanted, a young lady for a millinery department—salary for the first year £50." "Wanted, a young *person* of strictly Christian principles, as governess to five little girls; solid English education, French, Italian, music, drawing, and the use of the globes necessary, salary £10 per annum; and the share of a comfortable home." "Widow, wanted as housekeeper to a single gentleman, not over forty" (which was to be "not over forty," the advertisement did not say). "Wanted a cook"—the cooks seemed decidedly to have the best of it, so far as salaries went; but Mary's heart sank as she read on, and then she cast the paper aside.

Quitting the rickety little calico-covered sofa, she frequently rose to look from the window into the street without. The architecture, material, and construction of the houses seemed novel to her eye, while the window panes being almost flush with the external walls, suggested alarming ideas of insecurity. The voices of the passers, and the names on the signboards, like the sound of the church bells, all spoke to her of being in a strange place, and of being utterly among strangers.

Slowly passed the day, and after she had been some hours alone, she began to feel forlorn and nervous. Oh, the gloom of that London lodging-house—she should never, never forget it! Her liberty, her being so unheeded and uncared for, almost terrified her. There were none to greet her, and none whom she could greet. She felt as if her existence was already being ignored. To add to the gloom of her thoughts, she had read in that day's *Times* of two cases of death from starvation—death

amid the wealth and luxury of London. And in one instance the victim had been a governess, a lady of many accomplishments, but out of employment. Starvation! the idea filled her with horror; but, with God's help, such could never be her fate, for was there not Lady Wetherall, whom Lady Wedderburn felt assured would refuse *her* nothing?

The very opening and shutting of the house door, and the rat-tat of its knocker, suggested the idea of temporary lodgings, and not of home. *Home!* alas, she had none now, though even the dog's kennel or the half-ruined stable at Lonewoodlee, would have seemed as such to her then. Never more—never more, should she feel the sublime sense of security afforded by home and a father's roof!

She felt somewhat relieved, however, when gossipy little Mrs. Primer came to ask her to "join her at tea, with a chop, quite cheery in her own back parlour." The kind woman had hot muffins, shrimps and watercresses—even a little flask of Old Tom—provided as a relish; and she was very anxious to hear all about Scotland (the late Mr. Long Primer's mother having been a native of that country), her ideas of which were decidedly cloudy, and somewhat pre-railway, being chiefly deduced from a cheap edition of Miss Porter's "Scottish Chiefs," and "Rob Roy," as she had seen it performed at the Lyceum or Surrey Theatre.

"And if Miss Lennox would like to go to the play to-night, or any night," she added, "they could get a pit order from the first floor front, Miss Madelena de Montmorencie, who was leading lady at one establishment, or her third floor back, Mr. Algernon Sidney Spangles, who was the light comedy gent at another; or to see funny little Mr. Robson in 'Jones the Avenger,' when one didn't know whether to laugh or cry, and so did both at once; or to see Mr. Harley, as—begging your pardon, Miss—was Bottom at the Princess's." But Mary nervously declined all these kind offers of patronage, urging that she was in deep mourning, and had been face to face with sorrow too recently.

Even amid her intended civility and benevolence, Mrs. Primer came out at times with little remarks that jarred on Mary's, perhaps, overwrought sensibility.

"I think, my dear," said she, as she slowly stirred her tea and balanced the spoon from time to time on the edge of her cup, "you said it was a situation as governess you were a-looking after?"

"Yes."

"Oh, I quite forgot to ask—have you got a character?"

"A what—Mrs. Primer?" asked Mary, with genuine surprise, while the other began to fidget and cool her tea in the saucer,

"Testimonial of any kind from your last place?"

"No, I have never been in a situation, and consequently never thought such things were necessary."

"No character—no testimonials—not even a line from the rector or parish clergyman?"

"I have nothing of the kind."

"Oh lor, oh lor, you are simple as a new-born babby! Why, child, you'll not get a place even as a lady's maid, without some such papers."

"I have a letter of introduction, such as one lady may give to another," replied Mary, coldly and proudly, yet feeling crushed in heart and broken in spirit, for that such things should be said to her, plainly showed already how poor and dependent her position in life was becoming.

And Mary—she who, in her pride of heart, had shrunk from kissing Lady Wedderburn, while under the roof of her dead father's house—now in the utter loneliness of that heart, kissed with real affection the cheek of the plain little Englishwoman, as she left her for the night; for she felt gratefully conscious that Mrs. Long Primer had been kind and good to her.

But the word "character" continued to rankle in her memory; and at times, especially in the darkness and silence of her bedroom that night, ere she slept, there crept into her soul an intense longing to be laid at rest by her father's side, where she might never—too probably should never—lie, in the Lennox aisle at Willowdean.



CHAPTER XXXIX.

LOST.

REFRESHED by a deep and dreamless sleep, after her hands had been folded in prayer for assistance and guidance, Mary rose, inspired by a hope that ere the new day was past, she should have come to the end of her chief doubt and difficulty; but she had to count several weary hours until the time would be suitable for her to call on a person of Lady Wetherall's position.

The smart and bustling little Mrs. Long Primer suggested that Mary should take an omnibus so far as this or that point, changing here and changing there, as a matter of economy. However, Mary became so bewildered by the strange names and infinite number of changes to be made, that she preferred going by cab; but before setting out she met with a terrible shock. Mrs. Primer suggested some little change in her travelling costume, which Mary had forgotten all about; but she had the required alteration in her trunk.

"And that, I forgot to say, has gone before you to Lady Wetherall's, my dear," said Mrs. Primer, rubbing her hands over each other and smiling with pleasure.

"Before me—how?"

"Her ladyship's own man came for it this morning early, and left her compliments, with the message that you were to follow as soon as you chose."

"It is impossible—it is incredible!"

"Lor, Miss. How?"

"Lady Wetherall knows nothing about me, and nothing of my being in London. She never even heard a word of me!" said Mary, becoming very excited as she hurried to the passage and saw that her property was indeed gone.

"What can it mean?" asked Mrs. Primer, growing pale.

"The man must have been a robber."

"A robbery in my 'ouse, Miss Lennox—take care what you say, ma'am!" exclaimed Mrs. Primer, growing red, while all the quilling of her cap quivered with her anger.

"By Jingo, it looks very like it, missus," said Tom Gubbs, the guard, who had overheard these remarks, as he was about to depart for the midday train; "it's a regular do, Mrs. Primer, and has been done by one of the fellows as was a loafing and listening about the platform at the Terminus yesterday—perhaps it's the cabby himself, for all we know or may ever know, that's away with the young lady's box, and she'll never see it again on this side o' time."

Mary was dreadfully harassed by this loss. The trunk—apart from a few little family relics—contained all she possessed in the world, and what she was totally without the means of replacing. She seemed so crushed that Mrs. Primer, in pity, felt the necessity of saying something.

"Her ladyship *may* have sent for it, after all. Might not your friend in Scotland have written to say that you were about to visit her?"

"Yes. But how were either of them to know that I was here?"

"It is impossible to say. The telegraph tells things wonderful now-a-days."

"And then she would have sent her carriage for me," said Mary, wearily and dreamily.

"If she has one."

"She must; for I have heard that she is very wealthy."

Tom Gubbs was off by this time to give information to the police, while Mary, unable longer to delay, procured a cab and set out for Piccadilly; but not before her kind landlady—whose prevailing idea was that people should eat under all circumstances, whether joy or grief—had forced her to partake of a little luncheon, and followed her to the door with the warmest wishes for her success.

Mrs. Primer's little ones were all dead, and the good-hearted woman having known much of sorrow in her time, felt a genuine interest in Mary and sympathy for her. She seemed so gentle, so thankful for any kindness, so unsuspecting and truthful ; and yet withal, as a stranger utterly ignorant of London and its ways, most helpless. She awaited her return with considerable impatience, and calculating that she might be away at the furthest about three hours, put off the usual time of tea (her most important meal, if it could be called such), that they might have it cosily together, with a pleasant chat about Lady Wetherall's house and establishment ; what manner of woman her ladyship was ; how she dressed ; what her two little girls were like, and so forth.

She wondered if Mary would come to see her after she was fairly established in one of those great mansions in Piccadilly. Mrs. Primer hoped she might, for the young lady didn't look in the least proud ; but the idea of herself returning the visit, and being admitted by a huge footman, all calves and whiskers, never entered the timid little woman's head.

The summer afternoon wore drowsily on, and the shadows began to deepen and then to darken in the gloomy brick streets and alleys off the Strand. The clock of St. Clement's struck six, and Mary had now been absent four hours. Mrs. Primer could wait no longer. She took her tea alone, but left the pot to simmer on the hob, beside some hot muffins, for she was certain the poor young lady would return harassed and weary.

Another hour passed without her appearing. Still Mrs. Primer did not feel alarmed ; she knew that great folks dined very late, almost in the middle of the night, she had even heard ; and what could be more likely than Lady Wetherall keeping her visitor to dinner. So she looked forward with real pleasure to a description of the marvels thereof. Eight, and then nine, were duly chimed in succession from the church tower, and still Mary was absent ; and when ten o'clock and darkness came together, Mrs. Long Primer began to feel a real anxiety mingled with alarm. She knew the snares and pitfalls that beset the steps of the unwary in London, and more particularly would one so beautiful as Mary Lennox be subjected to peril ; for she was an orphan, and utterly friendless and unknown. Mrs. Primer knew from an article she had lately read in the *Times*, that many more than a thousand beings disappeared in the streets yearly, being literally lost beyond all human ken ; and dreadful stories of abductions and robberies, of concealed traps that opened over the river in the floors of nefarious dens and mysterious houses, recurred to her memory, for the slow rolling current of the mighty Thames hides many a terrible crime.

A sudden terror seized her : that the man who had stolen

the trunk that morning might have got some deeper plot in hand ; that Mary might not have been taken to Piccadilly at all ; that some wicked woman might personate Lady Wetherall, and lure her away to where she might never be heard of again.

Midnight came, and still the girl was absent ; and then the good woman's anxiety of heart amounted almost to an agony, but she knew not what to do, or where, or to whom to go. Despite her fears of rheumatism and toothache, with a shawl over her head, she remained long at an open window, watching and listening. Twice or thrice a cab dashed along down Howard Street, and then her heart leapt with hope : but, as it turned into the Strand, the hope, like the sound of its wheels, died away.

The noises without became less and less. The gaslights in the adjacent houses had all been turned off ; silence and deeper darkness seemed to be settling all around her. Miss de Montmorencie and the light comedy man, who were always late, had both returned long ago, and it became evident that the lost lady would not return until the morrow—if she ever returned at all !

Then another vague terror, that she might be held somehow responsible, personally, for this disappearance, occurred to Mrs. Long Primer, and added greatly to her perturbation of spirit.

At last she closed the window with a sigh, and was about to retire to bed, when suddenly, about two in the morning, a hansom cab dashed up to the door, and there was such a vehement use made of the brass knocker that the whole house resounded like a drum.

Mrs. Primer sprang again to the window, and a cry of alarm escaped her on beholding a night policeman, flashing his bull's-eye on her brass plate, while alighting from the vehicle. And then the conviction came over her that some terrible catastrophe must have occurred to Mary Lennox ! She must have been robbed, maltreated, or ridden over at least !

CHAPTER XL.

PICCADILLY.

WITH her heart full of sore anxiety concerning her loss, out of the quietude of gloomy and shabby Norfolk Street, Mary had been rapidly taken by the cab into the roar, the rush, the racket, and the breathless heat of London, in one of its hottest months, when every breath of air seems to have passed away, and the sunshades of the shop windows cast strong dark shadows on the heated pavement. Guiding his lean horse with marvellous skill, the cabman tore along between the endless tides of busses,

crowded inside and out; drays and hansoms, splendid equipages, and costermongers' carts, and Mary felt again as if in a dream; for ages instead of hours seemed to have elapsed since she had left her sequestered home—the gloomy tower, the solemn thicket, the pastoral hills, and the months of close attendance on a sick bed, in a half-darkened and silent room. All, all seemed to have happened long, long ago; and all to be far, far away. So far that it seemed incredible to realize the fact, that little more than ten hours by rail, would set her among the lonely Lammermuir hills again.

Along all the line that Mary was driven, none of the sordid squalor peculiar to some of the humbler parts of London was visible. All savoured of wealth, to be won or wasted, of splendour, and of luxury. There were stately buildings of vast magnitude; beautiful equipages, with shining liveries bearing past beauty and fashion: there were enormous plate-glass windows, glittering with jewellery and gold and silver vessels; rich dresses and fabrics, and good things of all kinds, from every portion of the habitable globe, and from the very waters that wash its furthest shores; everything that fancy can create or appetite suggest was there, for London is the true metropolis of the world.

As Mary looked on all this, hope began to spring up in her heart. Once established as an inmate of Lady Wetherall's house, she would earnestly and honestly do her duty to her pupils there; and perhaps elsewhere, in time to come, might, as a teacher, make her voice, so vaunted at home, the means of further acquisition. She would toil for money—not that she cared for lucre in itself—but as a means to an end. That she might relieve the wants of the indigent, and do good unto others, to people who might be as poor and forlorn as she herself was then forlorn and poor. She would seek the abodes of poverty and affliction, and God would reward her for all this by the blessings that would be poured upon her by grateful hearts. Among other fond projects for the future, was the erection of a monument to her parents at home; and as she thought of it, there stole over the soft face of the pretty day-dreamer, weaving her plans even as Alnaschar wove his of fancied greatness, over the basket of crystal—a divine smile as she sketched the design in her mind's eye, and traced the inscription to their beloved memory.

The girl was young, yet it was strange that no thought of a lover or of marriage ever entered her scheme of the days to come, till the appearance of a splendid battalion of the Foot Guards marching past the National Gallery with all their bayonets glittering in the evening sun, and the crash of their brass bands waking the echoes of peristyle and dome, recalled Cyril to her memory with a keen pang; and she reflected that

it was better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all, for their passion had been a sweet one while it lasted.

"God pity the desolate loving heart, the only star of whose hope is gone out in utter darkness;" and so thought Mary, as she clasped her hands in bitterness.

From the Strand, where she had close glimpses of the mighty river, with its dark forests of masts and rigging, past the great façade of Somerset House, up the Haymarket, and across Great Jermyn Street, she had been driven into Piccadilly, and along that splendid thoroughfare, to Mary it seemed that they must have proceeded many miles, when the cabman suddenly drew up at the number she had given him, and, having successfully extracted from her double his legal fare, he whipped up his horse the moment she alighted, and disappeared, leaving her on the pavement, looking wistfully at the house; for among all the stately, gay, and brilliantly decorated mansions in Piccadilly, Lady Wetherall's alone seemed gloomy and deserted, and Mary's heart now began to palpitate, for it was the first time she had ever found herself about to face a total stranger in the attitude of a dependant or a suppliant.

The blinds were all down; the steps and entrance, which stood between four white pillars, seemed dusty, unswept, and neglected, and hence a foreboding chill, with a hope that Lady Wedderburn had mistaken the number, came over Mary's mind. She rang the bell, and had to do so thrice ere the door was opened by a sharp-featured little woman, who was dressed in rusty black with a widow's cap of portentous size, and who eyed Mary somewhat suspiciously and superciliously.

"Is this Lady Wetherall's—or have I made a mistake?" asked the visitor, timidly.

"Yes; it is Lady Wetherall's 'ouse; but what do *you* want, Miss?"

"I have a letter for her——"

"Then you must post it, for her ladyship ain't at 'ome," replied the little woman, in a sharp falsetto voice.

"Not at home?"

"No; nor in England either."

"Where is she?"

"With the family in Paris."

"But when does she return?" asked Mary, clinging still to chances.

"Can't say, Miss; but when the London season will be over, she will be sure to go down to the country. Can I do anything for you, Miss?" asked the housekeeper, civilly enough, but gradually closing the door nevertheless.

"Nothing, thanks," said Mary, in a gasping voice as she turned away, and the woman watched her with some interest,

for her steps seemed to totter when she reached the pavement. She felt the absolute necessity of getting out of the stunning and breathless bustle then, to consider the future. Immediately opposite Lady Wetherall's house a gate of the Park stood invitingly open, and the shadow of its trees looked tempting. She soon found a seat, and there, for more than an hour, Mary sat lost in thought and bewilderment—in fear and dejection, totally oblivious of the number of men who passed and repassed; of one or two who seated themselves near and sought to attract her attention; of the equipages and equestrians pouring past, and more than all of the policeman, who, perhaps luckily for herself, “had his eye on her,” for to him there seemed something mysterious about her, and she evidently “didn’t seem an every-day young woman;” for it is one of the peculiarities of London that no person can be too respectable in aspect, too attractive in face or manner, too richly or plainly dressed, to be above suspicion; and she frequently clasped her hands as she said in her heart—

“God help me! What *am* I to do now; in London, unknown, without employment, and robbed of all but a few pounds?”

Lady Ernescleugh was in town; she knew that her address was at a place called—she thought—Cavendish Square; but Mary Lennox felt that she would rather die by the curbstone than appeal for aid or patronage to her, at whose table the odious story of Chesterhaugh had first been mentioned, to render her the victim of local impertinence, malevolence, and envy.

The sun had set; the shadows in the Park were deepening, and the appearance of a few lamps twinkling at intervals, brought to Mary's mind the necessity for seeking the only roof of which she had any knowledge, kind Mrs. Primer's in Norfolk Street, from whence she resolved to write without delay to Lady Wedderburn for advice, and to obtain, perhaps, a letter to some other wealthy friend in London. Already humbled and crushed by loneliness, by grief and misfortune, all foolish pride on the score of the Willowdean family had completely left her heart. Her cab fare had been so excessive or extortionate that she resolved to make her way back on foot, trusting to the directions of strangers. Giving a small coin to a little fellow who had been going round and round her in wheel-fashion on his hands and feet with wonderful rapidity, she inquired of him “the way to Norfolk Street in the Strand.”

Whether inspired by mischief, or in mere ignorance, Mary could never afterwards determine, but this imp of the pavement—one of those intensely sharp and funny little vagabonds who are so peculiarly of London growth, a denizen of the streets and gutters, where like wandering curs they hunt for chance

morsels—sent her in exactly the opposite direction by pointing towards Hyde Park Corner, and telling her that when there she was to turn to the right and go straight on ; the consequence was, that when darkness set in, and in her serious alarm she inquired of some one to “direct her to Mrs. Long Primer’s, Norfolk Street, Strand,” she was greeted with a rough laugh, and the inquiry if “she thought the Strand was to be found about Paddington,” for near that quarter of London she found herself, or supposed she found herself, misled, weary, and sinking with fatigue.

Never before had she been in the streets of a vast city by night, and the new scenes and sounds, the brilliant gin palaces, the music from occasional casinos and dancing-rooms, the strange words that were said to her, the vivid light at times, the strong dark shadows at others, all conduced to confuse and terrify her. Once or twice she received proper directions and wandered on in the desperate hope of recognising some landmark of her morning drive, such as St. Paul’s dome, the Nelson pillar, or the National Gallery, but sought in vain. The loss of her handkerchief, which had been filched from her—deliberately twitched out of her hand, indeed—suggested that she should take care of her little purse, which she secured in her bosom. She feared to offer money for a guide lest she should fall into some perilous snare ; more than one man had already addressed her in bantering terms of endearment, which only terrified, but failed to excite anger in her heart ; and, to avoid one of these who had begun persistently to follow her, in a pitiable state of irresolution she unfortunately turned down a quiet street, where she suddenly became involved in a miserable catastrophe.

CHAPTER XLI.

THE LONELY STREET.

AFRAID lest this strange follower should accost her rudely or even molest her, Mary took advantage of the shadow in a portion of the street, to spring into the recess of a doorway, where with palpitating heart she laid a hand upon the bell, determined to seek succour at all hazards if he came near. The man evidently missed her, and while he was gazing about him irresolutely, three fellows of a suspicious aspect, who appeared as suddenly as if they had been shot up through the pavement, flung themselves simultaneously upon him ! There was a brief—very brief—struggle ; a choking sound as of strangulation, a half-stifled cry in which a shriek from Mary mingled, and then the ruffians, one of whom she

perceived to be tall and thin, sallow-visaged, with a hooked nose and long moustache, vanished, leaving their victim on the pavement, partially garrotted and *minus* watch, purse, and hat.

It was a common case of cruel assault and robbery by street thieves.

Breathlessly Mary approached the stranger, who lay still and motionless. She had no fear of death—the dead had lain in her arms too recently—"a heavier weight than lead;" and as she looked down on the unfortunate man, she could perceive by the light of a gas-lamp close by that his hair was white and glistening. She thought of her father's silvery hair, and forgetting how this man had so recently scared and annoyed her, while stooping down and calling for help, she endeavoured to loosen his cravat that he might respire more freely.

While she was thus acting the part of a little Samaritan, several passers-by gathered around her, and four officers of police came up with a man handcuffed and in their custody; the tall sallow man with the hooked nose.

"I am so glad you have captured this wicked wretch!" said Mary, tremulous with excitement. "Oh, I saw it all happen—a horrible act of cruelty!"

"Ah! this is fortunate; then you fully recognise this person as one of the culprits?" said one who seemed by the difference of his dress to be an Inspector of police.

"Yes; perfectly."

The prisoner uttered a terrible oath mingled with a threat.

"That is well, ma'am. This fellow, Ben Ginger, *alias* 'the Captain,' is an old offender; but we'll have him finally locked up for this. Your evidence will be necessary, however. What is your name, Miss?" he added doubtfully, while peering into her face, as ladies are not wont to be abroad in the streets of London at that hour afoot, and especially alone.

Mary began to sob, and said—"My name is Lennox. I shall be so glad if you will direct me; I have lost myself since this afternoon in the streets, and cannot make my way——"

"Where to—home?"

"Home!" she repeated in a strange voice, for she felt that she had no home; and none but the homeless can tell how that little word thrills through the heart. Even he who composed "Sweet Home," the sweetest of our ballads, is said to have died without one, a mendicant in the streets of that great metropolis whose magnitude so terrified our little wanderer.

"You seem respectable; in mourning, too," resumed the Inspector, surveying her with the aid of a bull's-eye held up by one of his men.

"Mourning is a common dodge among this ere lot," said one of the latter, "and respectable gals don't ramble about the

streets at this hour, so we'll just take her along with us, and lock her up till morning."

"Unless you can show us your house, and give a proper address, I fear there's nothing else for it," said the Inspector.

"So look lively, little one, and keep up your pecker," said the captured thief, with a fierce grimace; "you're one of ourselves, you know, and as you've taken such a precious interest in me and my doings, you're welcome to a share of my bunk in the lock-up. Any objection, Inspector Tappleton?"

"Silence, fellow!" said the Inspector; "we are wasting time. Disperse this gathering crowd; help this poor man to rise, take him to the nearest surgeon's, and get his name and address. But you must come with us to the station-house, girl, if you are as you say, and as I suspect, a mere wanderer in the streets."

Mary started back with great horror, and, clasping her hands, exclaimed incoherently—"Oh, sir, do not take me there—what have I done? Oh, my papa, you are in your grave, and Harry, my brother, lies in his at Chillianwallah, but where will mine be?"

"The dissecting-table first, I hope," said the garrotter, with a bitter grin, while mutterings of commiseration, doubt, and ridicule, were heard among the listeners.

"At Chillianwallah?" said a constable, coming forward, and Mary's quick eye saw the Indian ribbon on his breast. "What was his regiment?"

"The *th Lancers."

"And did you say your name was Lennox?" said the official with increased interest.

"Yes."

"Lor, Miss, I know'd your brother well; I was in his troop, and, more than that, Miss, I was his own servant through all the campaign in Central India; and a kind master he was to me. A Captain Wedderburn of the Fusileers, and I, rolled him in a horserug and buried him with our own hands, the same day he was killed in the charge."

"My good man, I thank you," said Mary, almost choked in tears. "He was my only brother. Are you the John Finnis of whom he used to write?"

"Yes, Miss; the very same."

"I have no time to listen to all this," said the Inspector, impatiently.

"Beg pardon, for one moment," urged the constable. "Did you come from Scotland t'other day by the morning train?"

"Yes; to King's Cross."

"Then I'm sure you are the young lady I told Tom Gubbs, the guard, to take care of."

"I am; and he took me to Mrs. Primer's, near the Strand."

"Oh, sir," said Finnis the constable, turning to the Inspector,

"this young lady's respectability is unquestionable. I shall find her in the morning when wanted; but, in the meantime, how is she to get home?"

"Call a cab, and take her with you," replied the Inspector, while making by gaslight a brief memorandum of Mary's full name and present address (not an aristocratic one) in his notebook; and saying that she would certainly be required in the morning, or next day at latest, he proceeded to take care of the garrotted man.

"Come along with me, Miss Lennox, please," said Finnis the ex-Lancer, conducting her into the next street. "Cab!"

"Here you are; fus cab! But what lark is this? A gal and a blue-bottle," exclaimed a strange and tattered-looking being, who seemed to spring out of the gutter, and placed his hand on the door of a hansom.

"Get in, Miss, please. Norfolk Street, Strand."

"Bah! only a couple o' bobs' worth," said the driver, surlily, as he whipped up his lean Rosinante, and away they went.

Mary felt her heart full of gratitude, and so pleased at her escape, that she would have driven in the hansom with Finnis through the streets at noonday perhaps, without thinking of the incongruity of the situation; but, after a time, it *did* occur to her.

"Oh, Heaven!" she thought, "has it come to this with me, that I am grateful for the countenance and the protection of people so humble as these? and when my money is gone, what shall then be my fate?"

Her new ally treated her with the utmost deference, and expatiated at great length on the kindness, the bravery, and high spirit of his late captain, her brother; and he was still full of this subject when the hansom drew up at the door of Mrs. Long Primer's house, to the infinite relief in one way, and terror in another, of that little woman, who had a wholesome dread of "the Perlice," as she named them.

A few words rapidly explained all; but Mary had no sooner reached her room than she fainted, and for a few minutes was quite insensible. She was comparatively safe now; but that episode in the street by night was only the beginning of Mary's most serious sorrows, and with morning came the terror and repugnance of having to appear as a witness against the captured culprit. In her dreams the live-long night had the past and the future haunted her, and if for a few minutes she dropped off to sleep, she awoke with a convulsive start. She saw the struggle, the robbery, the hook-nosed ruffian, and cries for aid rang in her ear, or left her lips mechanically.

Her trunk, with her little all, had never been heard of, so she was compelled to abandon all hope so far as concerned it. The next day passed, and she heard nothing of the affair of the

robbery in which she was the chief, or only witness, so she spent a little time in writing to Lady Wedderburn; it was so pleasant now amid the black desperation of her situation to write to the mother of Cyril, and to cast herself upon her for protection, telling of her sad disappointment concerning Lady Wetherall, and asking if she would kindly give her another letter of introduction to any friend in London; and with a sigh of longing, and a prayer of hope, she had the letter posted in the nearest post-office, and her soul went with it back to the Lammermuirs! There came a kind and motherly answer in due course; but poor Mary Lennox was not at Norfolk Street to receive it. Dark horror had closed over her by that time!

CHAPTER XLII

ALDERMAN FIGSLEY.

THE clamorous fear and sense of extreme mortification at having to figure in a petty local court in some obscure part of London, as a witness in such a cause—her very name to go forth in print too, as connected with it—haunted Mary keenly, till a climax was put to her endurance on the morning of the second day, when Finnis arrived with the announcement that her presence was required before Alderman Figsley at the office in W—— Street, when the prisoner, familiarly known as “Ben Ginger,” would be brought up for a preliminary examination and committal.

A close cab was summoned, and they set out together, Mrs. Primer assuring her that she must keep up her courage, as this petty annoyance would soon be over.

When they arrived, Mary was politely enough handed to a seat within the bar, near a table covered with books and printed papers; and there she sat with a palpitating heart while the Alderman, a fussy, portly, and wealthy city man, with a bald head, a rubicund visage, and several double chins, disposed rapidly of numerous cases and accusations by fines, committals, or remittance to a higher court. The heinous crimes of poverty and sleeping in the open air, were always visited severely; and a little orphan urchin, whose nightly couch was the iron roller of the neighbouring park, was locked up without mercy.

The court in W—— Street was a dingy looking apartment, the windows of which were placed high in the damp and discoloured walls. It was a metropolitan court, and consequently presided over by an alderman; all other magistrates are stipendiary—carefully selected barristers—else Mary's case might have been managed differently had she been before one of them.

A gentleman of fashionable appearance, calling himself Mr. Jones Robinson, was brought up for extinguishing and smashing a street lamp in the exuberance of his spirits ; and Mary drew her black veil closer on recognising Everard Home, the Master of Ernescleugh, who after tapping playfully, and perhaps contemptuously, with his cane, on the iron spikes of the dock before him, paid his fine, and departed with the air of one who deemed the affair a joke.

"Call the next case—what is it?" said the magistrate, impatiently, for as none of those before him possessed any particular interest he was getting a little weary, and proceeded to polish his bald head with a silk handkerchief in irritation till it shone.

"William Trayner—livery servant, your worship, accused of assault in a Betting House," was the reply ; "his master, an officer about to embark for the seat of war, will be ready to pay any fine you may impose."

And to her astonishment, Mary beheld the impudent looking groom of Ralph Chesters—the same long-bodied, short-legged, and gimlet-eyed individual who had aided and abetted him in the scheme against herself—step into the dock with a remarkably airy and confident aspect, while at the same moment Chesters entered the court, attired in a fashionable morning costume, and certainly looking more bloated and dissipated than ever.

Mary was too thoroughly Scottish by blood and education to be without a tinge of superstition in her character ; and to her it seemed ominous of misfortune—a conjunction of three evil stars,—a strange coincidence,—that those three men who had brought her so much mischief at home, should be there, in that London Court, at this unhappy juncture.

Chesters' quick eye immediately fell upon Mary seated near the Alderman, a remarkable piece of courtesy which roused his curiosity ; but as yet, her veil totally prevented recognition. The assault in the Betting House was fully proved against Mr. Bill Trayner, who was wont to make up a book on coming events as well as his master, who immediately paid the fine. Trayner touched his fore-lock to the Magistrate, and vanished at once ; but Chesters, inspired by curiosity—and, perhaps, a deeper interest—lingered a little in a corner, to the infinite chagrin of Mary, leisurely sucking the white ivory handle of his riding whip the while.

"There is but one more case, your worship," said Inspector Tappleton ; "the assault upon and robbery of Mr. Fenchurch, solicitor, by garrotters, of whom we have, unfortunately, but one in custody as yet."

As he spoke, a pale, cadaverous, and savage looking fellow in very worn habiliments appeared in the dock between two

officers, and glanced at the magistrate and all about him with defiance and malevolence. He had been brought from the House of Detention, and was heavily ironed, as the authorities seemed to fear that he was quite capable, unless under powerful restraint, of destroying himself or some one else, as he frequently threatened to do. He boldly and furiously denied all knowledge of the circumstance of which he was accused, averring that he was in another place at the time.

"We have a competent witness, your worship," said Inspector Tappleton of the 1st Division.

"Stand forward, Mary Lennox, and draw off your glove," said a voice, authoritatively.

Chesters gave an undisguised and almost convulsive start on hearing the name; and still more was he astonished when Mary came forward.

"Lift your veil, please," said the Alderman, with a very curt nod.

Her face was pale as that of death, and her eyes were full of alarm, shame, and a restlessness of expression; the very sweetness of her mouth had departed, and a hard line replaced the curve of her once beautiful upper lip.

"Are you married or single? speak quickly," said he, pausing, pen in hand, after the usual preliminaries.

"Single, sir," she answered faintly.

"No objection to be the other, I suppose," said he, hazarding the attempt at a jest.

"Yes, I guess as she's a rum un' your worship," said a constable, encouraged by this; "for she vears a kind o' vedding ring on the wrong finger."

"Silence!" said the Inspector, severely.

The portly Alderman now turned to Mary, and politely enough required her to relate all she had seen, and to confirm her full recognition of the prisoner. Her evidence was deemed quite conclusive to warrant the committal of the culprit for trial before a higher court, and he was accordingly removed, partly by force, muttering vengeance against Mary if she ever crossed his path again, as being herself an accomplice.

"Don't be afraid, Miss," whispered Finnis, on seeing how terrified she was; "'taint likely as the streets of London will be troubled by him again."

"Search her pockets!" bellowed Ben Ginger, as he was dragged away. A constable approached her; Mary shrunk back, but instinctively put her hands into the outer pockets of her jacket, and drew forth from one, in utter confusion and bewilderment, a leather portemonnaie, which was found empty of money, but contained the cards of Mr. Fenchurch, to whom it undoubtedly belonged.

"This looks ill, young woman—deuced ill for you," said the Alderman, frowning.

"It may all be a plant, your worship—they've perhaps put it in the young lady's pocket," said Inspector Tappleton.

"Still, why did she not find it there before, and produce it?" was the suspicious question of the magistrate.

Mary's tongue clove to the roof of her mouth; she vainly strove to say that she had never, until then, thought of looking in her pockets, or on going home that night; she was crushed, terrified, bewildered, and unable to speak, till she faintly implored a glass of water.

After some inquiries concerning Mary, as to where she lived, what friends she possessed and so forth, the magistrate said, coldly—"I find that your account of yourself is so unsatisfactory, that I must require you to give your personal recognisance that you will appear at the due time to give further evidence against this man."

Mary stared in utter bewilderment; she failed indeed to understand what he meant, but feeling only that money was somehow required of her, she put her hand to her purse, and then nervously withdrew it. With some irritation of manner, for though obese, he was not blessed with overmuch patience or temper, the Alderman repeated the information that she must give the necessary security for her appearance whenever required.

"Sir, I have not above six pounds in the world—it is impossible; if that sum will do, take it, and keep it; but permit me to go, I entreat of you. I am so sick of this place!" she said imploringly.

"Mr. Fenchurch is very ill, you say, Tappleton?"

"Dangerously, sir—we have here a doctor's certificate," replied the Inspector.

"Then, if anything serious befell him, the prisoner will be liable for manslaughter—or worse—a double reason for procuring security to insure the ends of justice."

Turning to Mary, he said, "The discovery of this purse upon you is awkward; can no one be found who will be bail for you?"

"None, sir—oh, whom could I ask?"

"That is your affair; not mine."

All this time she had studiously kept her back to Chesters, but the sense of his odious presence, if it oppressed her in one way, gave her a species of false courage in another.

"You positively cannot find bail?"

"Oh, no, sir—no."

"Then I have but one alternative," said Mr. Alderman Figsley, dipping his gold pen in the ink bottle; "sorry for it, but I must at least commit you to prison till this fellow's trial comes off."

"To prison—to prison!" repeated Mary in a voice of anguish that is indescribable, while she clasped her hands and gazed into the round stolid face and shining gold spectacles of the city Solon with intense fear and entreaty mingled, while on her quivering lips a prayer seemed to hover.

"If I may venture to speak a word, your worship," began Finnis the ex-Lancer, with irrepressible anxiety; "I served under this young lady's brother in the war in Central India, and elsewhere under Brigadier—"

"What the deuce has Central India to do with the case!" exclaimed the Alderman, testily, as he looked at his massive repeater, and remembered that he had an appointment in the city; "the girl has no business to be prowling about the streets alone at the hour mentioned; I don't like that affair of the purse, and I must insure her presence; she will be safer a prisoner than at large. You are a soft-hearted fellow, Finnis, and this is not the first time you have been the dupe of a pretty face and an artful manner. You hear me, sir!"

Whatever was the instance to which the Alderman referred, in which Finnis had been guilty of softness of heart, the rebuke had the effect of completely silencing him, and the good-natured fellow slunk back abashed.

"You have positively no friends in London to whom you can apply?" said Figsley, pausing as he looked doubtfully at the girl's horror-struck face.

In her despair Mary thought of poor Mrs. Primer. But could she, a total stranger, expect a widow struggling for subsistence by letting a humble lodging-house, to be her surety for some amount—she knew not what? Then she actually thought again of the haughty Lady Ernescleugh; but, as before, shrunk from an appeal to her.

"No—no," muttered Mary; "better let the daughter of Oliver Lennox die unknown in the very gutter, than appeal to any—to any, but God!"

"I have a letter," faltered Mary; "a letter from a lady of rank in Scotland to a friend in London, but found, sir, that she had gone to Paris, and—and——"

"Where is this letter? I cannot open it, of course; but the address may be some clue or guarantee."

Mary searched her pockets in vain; her letter was gone! In fact, she had pulled it forth with her handkerchief, and it was now safely deposited under the left foot of Chesters, who had cleverly twitched it towards him with the lash of his riding whip unseen.

"Oh fatality! The letter is lost—I have it not, sir!"

"This is all, I fear, some specious pretence; we are too much used to such trickery in London. If you were at all so respect-

able as you pretend, and as your appearance certainly warrants, you would find no difficulty in getting some humane person to be security for you. Every one has some friend——”

“Save the poor; and God knows how poor am I!” she added, with touching pathos.

“I have no time for all this sentimentalism; you must go to prison,” replied the magistrate, as he proceeded deliberately to fill up the warrant for her committal.

“Oh, Chesters—Captain Chesters,” exclaimed Mary, suddenly turning in her dire extremity and fear, and stretching her hands towards him; “will you not speak for me?”

“Whew—what is this?” asked the Alderman, frowning at her over his spectacles, and thoroughly filled with suspicion now.

He had been actually beginning to conceive the idea of making some other arrangement concerning her. But now he rapidly dismissed the thought from his mind, and felt irritated that he had permitted her to impose upon him for a single moment.

“I thought, girl, that you had no friends in London; yet you suddenly recognise one here—here in this very court, and in the master of that disreputable groom, who I have just permitted to go under a fine for a very unprovoked assault. There must be some collusion here! Captain Chesters, your town address is the Army and Navy Club, I believe?”

“Major Chesters, Mr. Figsley; I am Major Chesters, of the Turkish Contingent.”

“Do you know this young person?”

“I know her intimately.”

“Can you speak for her in any satisfactory way?”

“On one condition, and I must name it to herself.”

He drew near her, and in French whispered something rapidly to Mary, who surveyed him with a sublime expression of scorn and loathing.

“What is all this?” said Alderman Figsley, becoming now seriously angry. It is doubtful whether a knowledge of French was among the number of his accomplishments, but he frowned portentously, and muttered something about “contempt of court.”

“Oh, sir,” exclaimed Mary, “this gentleman—if I may venture to call him so now—knew my father, knew my family, knew me almost as a child, and he might have the common humanity to speak one gentle word for me here.”

“I only know, Miss Lennox, that in your own locality at home, you were spoken of lightly enough, latterly,” he replied with a malevolent glance.

“Oh, papa! my poor papa!—thank Heaven you know nothing of all this! What have I ever done to you, sir, that you should

treat me thus, in a strange place, too, when you might, and ought, as a Christian to befriend me?"

"Bah! your name and mine have been mixed up enough, and oddly enough already, Mary; so it is no use attempting to play genteel comedy or act injured innocence here."

The subtle villany of this speech, in such a time and place, made all present exchange smiles of intelligence, and caused the magistrate to be less inclined to pity Mary. He was far from being a hard-hearted man in the main, and thought there might—nay must—be more in all this scene than met the eye or ear. So he signed the fatal warrant, and leisurely placed the blotting paper over it. Then he handed it to an officer, saying—

"It is for Tothill-fields Prison; but, in case of mistake, let her have a separate sleeping cell," retired at once to an inner room, as if to cut short a matter that had already occupied too much of his valuable time.

"Tothill-fields," repeated Chesters to himself; "good, I'll have you yet, my proud little minx! Bravo! here's Ralph Rooke Chesters against the field! Unless in despite of the fate that is hurrying her downward, she take some silly qualm of conscience, as it is called, bar accident the race is mine! How lucky that Trayner fell into that scrape and brought me here. I should have known nothing otherwise of her being in London. Ta, ta," said he aloud, with all the coolness of practised effrontery, "I am going to soldier again, but in Turkey, my girl, for I am sorry to say that my creditors are much more attached to me and my fortunes than you are, my pretty Mary; so it is better to have a shy at the Russians abroad, than become a billiard-marker, or a gentleman rider at home. Any messages for our mutual friend the Fusileer? Shall be happy to take them, I'm sure."

And kissing the tips of his kid gloves, with an ironical bow and a leering smile, for both of which he deserved to have been blown from the mouth of a gun, the heartless *vaurien*, gamester, and spendthrift mounted his horse and rode off to the Lady's Mile, and "to do a bit of park," followed by his groom in accurate livery, while Mary Lennox of Lonewoodlee, in a state more dead than alive, and looking as if transformed to marble, was taken away to the prison in which she was to be detained, in a common dark and grated police van!

CHAPTER XLIII.

MEPHISTOPHELES AGAIN.

A PRISONER, and without a crime! Mary Lennox felt that fate was indeed dealing hardly with her. When the first wild paroxysms of grief and mortification were passed, she learned to understand that she should be released and free the moment the robber's trial was over; but whither was she to turn then? Could she seek for any employment, however humble, and say that her last abode had been a public prison? Her purse would be restored to her she had been told; but how long might its contents avail her, especially when all the wardrobe she possessed was the fast fading suit of black she now wore.

All these reflections, and others, coursed through her mind, causing such pangs of pain in her heart, that each was like a probe of hot steel.

There was a valuable diamond in Cyril's ring, but the idea of parting with it never occurred to her, or that it possessed other value than accrued to it in her own estimation, from being his gift to her in a time of vanished happiness.

Three weeks after the scene we have narrated saw Mary still in a cell of the prison, gazing in listless abstraction, and with eyes that were becoming dull and stony in aspect, from a grated window at the high brick boundary-wall of the place, a barrier to liberty and the external world, defended by two rows of crooked spikes. The chaplain had been kind, and gave her a few dreary books and pious publications; while the matron, whose occupation rendered her naturally suspicious, and who could not be convinced that Mary was not an evil girl in some way, otherwise she should certainly have friends of some kind, supplied her with work, and urged her to "do a little white seam," that she might have more money by her when set at liberty.

But she had ever one thought which rankled bitterly in her heart, that she was a prisoner, though guiltless of a crime! Should she ever smile—ever sing again—she who had so often sung with an aching heart? Deadened by the massive walls, the roar of mighty London came to her ears like a drowsy hum, and dreamily she listened to it.

Within every shadow there is a deeper shade. To Mary it seemed strange that she should have been able to undergo so many shocks to her nervous system, so many humiliations to her proper pride, so many bitter mortifications, so many sorrows and affronts, and not have died! Yet she was still living, with all the impulses of life strong within her, save its best and brightest one—hope, for that was fading now.

Her lover ! He was a feature of the past ; yet she could not look on his betrothal ring without a strange thrill running through her bosom, while fond memory flew back to many an hour of quiet joy beside the lonely stile and by the old pine wood. Anon she dismissed these regrets as unworthy of her ; but she longed and yearned amid the solitude of her cell for one caress, one kind word from the poor old man who had so loved and petted her !

"Never more—never more !" she would moan and mutter. Could she but join him ! The attempt would be a crime against her Maker—yea, even the thought thereof, was a sin ; but the dark idea would come to her again and again.

Memories grew strong and keen out of the monotony of her existence. And the most vivid were of her father, so fond and doting, so passionate and querulous, and yet, withal, ever so gentle and affectionate to her. So, then, would come before her with morbid and painful distinctness the scene of his death-bed, his passing away, and the wistful look which, when once seen, is never forgotten—the glance we must all give one day, when the world is receding from us, and its smallness appears more small than ever. His was a smile of unutterable fondness and sadness, and there came the great change that chilled her heart then, and chilled it now—the pallor of death—the forerunner of eternity and peace.

On whose face would her last smile rest ? And who would close her eyes when the hour came ?

Times there were when a terror filled her soul lest she might come forth only to fall lower than poverty could make her ; for she remembered painfully one or two poor girls whom she had seen brought up before Alderman Figsley. But—no, no, she could only die, and be at rest for ever !

She knew that while she was gazing at the smoke-blackened brick wall or into the paved yard, where not a blade of grass was visible, the leaves would be thick and green in the rustling woods of the Merse ; the blossoms of the white and pink hawthorn and of the golden laburnum must have passed away ; but the honey bees would be humming drowsily in the sunshine among the flowers she had planted, and over the beautiful heath-clad hills that looked down on what was once her home. There still, in the breezy and sunny morning, the mavis and merle were singing, and the voice of the cushat-dove would sound in the old coppice, the *lone wood* ; but never more for her !

A pile of odious work for the matron was lying untouched before her, when she was roused from these dull thoughts by a warder announcing that "a gentleman, with an order from Alderman Figsley, had come to visit her."

She started from her seat with heightening colour ; a fore-

boding of the heart told her who this visitor would too probably be—and Chesters, bowing and smiling, was ushered in. He presented his hand; but Mary drew back, and covered her eyes with her hand and arm, as if to shut out the sight of him.

"That man—that man again! You here, sir?"

"As you see, Miss Lennox; or will you permit me, as an old friend, to call you Mary?"

"Friend!" she exclaimed, with loathing in her half averted face.

He was now attired in a blue undress uniform, elaborately frogged and braided about the breast. He wore a gilded waist-belt, and a sabre with a white ivory hilt, and carried in one hand a scarlet fez with a long blue silk tassel; for he was in the undress of an officer of the Turkish Contingent. His appearance was always that of a gentleman, but there was in his eyes the jaded and dissipated expression habitual to them: and there were certain hard lines about the mouth, at least the angles thereof, that indicated him to be a roué or worse, and a gambler who played at high stakes with honour, fortune, and destiny.

"So, you foolish little girl, it has come to this," said he, surveying the bare walls of the whitewashed cell. "Why would you not permit me to become your security—to speak for you, I mean?"

"Rather would I have died than have accepted from your hands the smallest favour on any terms, and least of all on such as you dared to offer me—the daughter of a gentleman, every way your superior! And how basely done—in French, too, lest the magistrate should overhear or understand you. Begone, sir! What seek you here?" she demanded, while surveying him with intense disgust, and drawing herself up the while with the air of a little tragedy queen, her eyes sparkling with resentment, and her hands clenched with energy. "Why intrude upon me, unasked, unwanted, and so abhorred as you are?"

"This is a cell in a prison," said he mockingly.

"True. But here my privacy is as sacred as if I occupied the saloon of a palace! And I am here—here—a prisoner, without crime!" And her voice died away as she spoke.

After a pause she asked,—

"Is it manly of you to come here and mock me in my misery?"

"I did not come to mock you, Mary."

"Leave me, sir. Whatever be my fate, I am stainless and guiltless."

"Notwithstanding all that, your character will be utterly gone, and a taint shall be upon you that will cause all to shrink from befriending you. If you seek for work, or aid of any kind, however menial, however humble, can you refer people

only to the chaplain or the turnkey of a prison? I should think not! Oh, Mary Lennox, you will starve, or do worse, in the streets of this vast modern Babylon!"

Mary trembled in her soul, for he was speaking her own terrible thoughts; but he was minute in his wish to torture her, and pitiless in his desire to bend her to his wishes.

"There are, of course, houses of refuge for casuals, and the hospitals for those who are ailing; and when the unknown or the unclaimed die there, where do their remains go? To the surgical theatre, where your beauty, which is undeniable, and where the very perfections of your person, may be made a source of speculation, perhaps of banter, for a rabble of young sprigs of anatomy; and thence to a grave, God knows where or how! Avoid the contingencies of a fate so terrible; I entreat you, dearest Mary, to listen to me, and—and——"

"Go with you?"

"Yes." And he drew nearer, as he spoke, earnestly.

"Never," said she, through her clenched teeth, while shrinking back. "Better death—any death, however black and desperate! Oh, how have I the patience to degrade myself by talking with you on such a subject? But I am becoming familiar with humiliation now and misery too!"

"I can prove a strong friend, Mary."

"Hitherto you have been a dangerous enemy—a veritable fiend."

"As you please, as you please. In this epoch of ours, much as we boast of enlightenment and advancement, passion is as strong, hate as bitter, and Destiny quite as inexorable and pitiless, as ever they were in the dark and middle ages."

Mary cowered and shivered as she spoke; and in the depth of her misery—a misery rendered all the more keen by the girl's extreme sensibility, he surveyed her with exactly such a glance or smile, as one might fancy in the face of Mephistopheles, while watching Goethe's heroine, poor Margaret, when she lay prostrate on the straw in prison, with a piece of brown bread and a pitcher of cold water beside her.

Mary's unconcealed repugnance and aversion for him, kindled at last the rage of this would-be lover; and, in revenge, he adopted an undisguised insolence of tone.

"So you hate me?"

"Say rather that I—despise you!"

"So you won't come with me to the East on any terms? By Jove, I could give you such a pretty gilded kiosk on the shore of the Bosphorus, where you might see all the gardens of Pera on one side; Scutari, with its mosques on the other, and all that sort of thing. I daresay that, as senior officer, I could get you out with me in the transport somehow; and we should do the

Mediterranean and the Levant at her Majesty's expense, and without requiring even a 'John Murray.' Say you'll come, and I shall get you out of this den in a twinkling. I shall soon make it all square with yonder Alderman, who made such a fuss about you. I am in funds, my girl, I can tell you: cleared two thousand odd, by a few strokes at billiards last night, after getting the I O U's of two noble lords—swell friends—by whose aid my leave at home has been somewhat protracted, as I threatened monetary pressure. Say you'll come. I have plenty of gold to pave the way, and won't we be jolly while it lasts? 'See; the mountains kiss high heaven'—you know the rest. Ah, you will find it better fun steaming past the isles of the Levant, than moping here or mooning at Lonewoodlee!"

Even his brusque insolence failed to rouse anger in her heart.

"Lonewoodlee—oh, Lonewoodlee!" she repeated, pressing her slender white fingers interlaced upon her sunken eyes and speaking in a soft and agitated voice; "my father's home! It is gone, and I have but the memory of it now, and of all I have lost, to remind me of the words of David," and lifting up her hands and eyes with much of sublime resignation in the expression of her pallid face, she said, "Dominus dedit, Dominus abstulit, sed nomen Domini benedictum!"

After a pause,

"Are you mad that you begin jabbering Latin in a place like this?" he asked, with an air of astonishment that was really genuine.

"I am not mad, sir, though I might well be; and now I have but once more to entreat—nay to command you, as you are a man, to leave me to my fate and trouble me no more."

"I shall do so—and be assured it will be a sad and degrading one."

"As God pleases."

She turned her back upon him, and with a glance in which rage and baffled desire triumphed over pity, he retired and left her in an almost fainting condition.

CHAPTER XLIV.

THE TROOPSHIP.

"THE detachment of the Royal Fusileers, under Lieutenant Horace Ramornie, proceeding to join the service companies at the seat of war, will embark on board the *Blenheim* transport at Gravesend, with others, under the command of Major R. R. Chesters of the Turkish Contingent."

Such was the garrison order, which Horace, to his infinite

chagrin, perused in a little vellum bound book, handed to him by a corporal, one evening, as he was proceeding to the mess of the provisional battalion. He had no desire whatever to find himself under the special command of such a man as Chesters; but there was nothing for it save obedience; and the various anecdotes elicited at table, or recalled to the memory of officers present, confirmed his dislike to the prospect before him, for the mere mention of Chesters' name seemed sufficient. He seemed to be as well known in the service as the goat of the Welsh Fusileers, though not so harmlessly. One remembered "how completely he had done Black of ours in that affair of the spavined mare;" another "how he had been jockeyed by him in a race at the Curragh;" "how he had so rooked Blake of the Rifles at Malta, that the poor fellow had to sell;" how he had abandoned one girl, run off with another and so forth; with many other things that would never figure on his tombstone, or opposite his name in Hart's Army List.

Three days after Horace read the order, and after the interview recorded in the preceding chapter, saw H.M. transport *Blenheim*, with fully three hundred officers and men for various corps in Turkey, under weigh and steaming down the river, greeted by many a cheer from the crews of passing ships.

Horace remembered all that had passed at home between his cousin Cyril Wedderburn and Chesters; and though he had secretly a peculiar detestation for the latter, it would have been alike unwise and unsafe to exhibit it, now that they were to sit at the same table, to meet daily on the same parade, to encounter each other incessantly on the deck or in the saloon during a voyage of so many thousand miles; and more than all now when Chesters bore the local rank of major, and was distinctly his *superior* officer.

All irritation would have to be repressed and all disagreeables avoided, for Horace could not but remember that his commission was his sole inheritance, and that Chesters would care little "to smash him" if he got an opportunity. So he resolved to shun him as much as possible by seeking the society of other officers, of whom there were some thirty captains and subalterns on board.

Though Chesters hated responsibility of any kind and would very willingly have been second in command to any one on whom the trouble of authority and risk of direction might have devolved, he was not the less disposed to be overbearing in manner, and to attempt to "talk down," all about him, especially at and after the mess, which took place at an earlier hour on board than is usual ashore.

He soon became heated with wine and rather quarrelsome, disputing with Ned Elton, a brother officer of Horace, about the odds

on the last Epsom; how *he* should have apportioned the weights, and how shrewdly he had guessed at the winning horse, yet, as if the devil was in it, didn't make a successful book after all, having been "sold," though he knew it not, by his own particular confidant, Trayner, who generally knew the contents of Chesters' betting book as well as his own.

"I'm safe on the Oaks, however," he added with an oath—"backed the winner at long odds there."

"A bad style of fellow this," whispered Elton to Ramornie; "we'll have many a case of row and arrest before we see the coast of Bulgaria, unless we combine and put him 'in Coventry.'"

Chesters had on board his faithful rascal Mr. Bill Trayner; but that amiable individual was at present enjoying his own society in the seclusion of the cable-tier, where, though a civilian, he was in irons for behaving insolently to a young officer of the Rifles, whom he taunted as "a carpet-bag 'cruity," a slang barrack-room phrase for a recruit who joins with a quantity of useless luggage; and on appealing to his master, the latter only laughed at him, and said—

"The bilboes and bread and water will do you good, Trayner, —you have been getting too fleshy of late."

And Trayner swore secretly that he would be revenged on Chesters for this at a future time. When idling over their wine and fruit, and while the transport was steaming slowly past the flat but fertile shore of Kent, and the salt marshes of Essex, Chesters with his habitual insolence of spirit and disposition to be obnoxious began to annoy the inoffensive and gentle Horace Ramornie.

"Heard of our friends at Willowdean lately, eh, Ramornie?" he asked; "we are neighbours you are aware."

"No," replied the other curtly (though he had just received a letter from his aunt before embarking), and he turned away.

"Wedderburn is at Varna, isn't he?"

"Yes."

"With yours?"

"Ours."

"You are fond of monosyllables, I think?" said Chesters, with a white gleam in his pale eyes.

Horace gave a haughty smile, and was turning to Elton, the Colonel's nephew, when Chesters resumed his scheme for "trotting him out," as he would have phrased it, and when he spoke the buzz and laughter around the table subsided, for all feared that a scene of some kind would ensue ere long, and felt exceedingly uncomfortable.

"When I was last at the Horse Guards, Ramornie, I heard some talk of a waggon train being formed; and as we have no Belem Rangers, your cousin will be looking for his spurs in

that force. He is a pleasant fellow, but a muff, and was an awful griff when he first came out to India."

Horace grew crimson with anger at the triple insolence of this speech; for to any military man the inference to be drawn from the first part of it, was most offensive.

"Major Chesters," said Horace, rising, while a chill seemed to fall on all at the table; "dare you impugn the honour of my cousin Captain Wedderburn of the Royal Fusileers?"

"No—far from it," replied Chesters, coolly, "whatever I may think," he added insolently, but aside. "Come, come Ramornie, take your wine, though it is a little corked, and let us be jolly. You could little imagine where I recently saw his last flame—that girl Lennox."

"Indeed—where?"

"Sent to prison from a London police court, where I had gone to bail out Trayner, who got into a row somewhere; to prison in London, by Jove! though I don't know exactly for what, unless it was involvement in some robbery affair."

"Miss Lennox?" exclaimed Ramornie, with genuine surprise and concern.

"Yes—Miss Lennox as you call her; hope she enjoys the silent and separate system peculiar to the London model prison, and so conducive to reflection and all that sort of thing."

Horace was inexpressibly shocked, but hoping that Chesters was telling what was untrue, he disdained to make further inquiries, and once more turned to his friend Elton, seeking to divert the conversation from himself; but Chesters was not to be baffled and began again, while leisurely dropping the ice into his champagne glass.

"And now Ramornie, to change the subject, how is the fair heiress—well and jolly I hope? You fellows—I mean you and the Wedderburns—will surely not let her slip through your hands. She is worth entering stakes for—a handsome girl, so well weighted, with a pot of money and no end of fun in her. A noble bird to bag, before the fields are in stubble."

"Silence, if you please, Major Chesters," said Horace, whose face from crimson had now become pale with passion, while his voice grew concentrated and low. "I have to request that the name of the lady in question be not uttered here, by your lips at least."

"That is very quarrelsome wine, surely—try the pale sherry; I have mentioned no name as yet," said Chesters, laughing.

"Then take heed how you do," added Horace, with his dark eyes flashing fire. How he cursed in his heart—even he, the quiet and gentle Horace—the rules of discipline, the amenities of society and civilized life, which prevented him from flying at this man's throat and dashing him under his feet. As for

"calling him out," the idea certainly did occur, only to be dismissed, for duelling had gone out of fashion, and he had not the greatest of Job's virtues—patience.

His soul was full of love and tenderness for Gwendoleyne—worshipping her as a pure and beautiful spirit, with all a young man's generous enthusiasm and joy; and thus it revolted him to hear her spoken of jestingly by any man, least of all by one such as Ralph Rooke Chesters!

"I am going on deck, Ramornie," said Elton, "try these cigars with me;" and taking the arm of Horace, he succeeded in drawing him from the cabin to the poop, whither the majority of the party followed, leaving Chesters with one or two more at their wine.

"Ramornie," said young Elton, drawing his friend apart, "I warn you to beware of that fellow of the Turkish Contingent. From the first moment he saw you on parade in the Barrack-yard, he evinced a determination to annoy and fix a quarrel on you. You remember how closely he inspected our fellows in particular, and found so many sham faults, actually bringing four of our best privates to the front, to have them put through their facings as if tipsy, and then made them ground arms as a final snare, that they might topple over. It was an insult to us all. So be wary. I can see that he is an utter scoundrel, and as Oldham says, 'he could outrogue a lawyer,'—aye, even a Scotch one, or a Jew; but at the same time he is your senior officer, and in all rows a junior invariably is sent to the wall. Besides, old fellow, I think we have had quite enough of that ship champagne."

"You are right, Elton," said Horace; "he is beneath my attention. But my head still aches with the memory of that champagne breakfast we had at Brompton with the Rifles, before we marched out."

"Clicquot and fun; eh, Horace?"

"They are all very well," added a *blasé*-looking officer with sleepy eyes and long fair moustaches; "but when to these you add hazard and *écarté*, as we had them, the breakfast becomes something to remember."

"And repent of; eh, Ponsonby?"

"Yes, decidedly—doocidly so, as I know to my cost."

"Was Chesters there?" asked Elton.

"Of course; d—n him!" was the rejoinder of Ponsonby, who was a 23rd man.

"Well," said Ramornie, thoughtfully, "the Essex shore looks flat and low now; we shall soon be in blue water, and see the last of Old England."

"Not the last, I hope," said Ponsonby, smiling.

"For some among us, certainly, if knocks are going."

"Anyway, thank God, we are off in earnest," said Elton; "I was so sick of Chatham, with its boredom of drills and sham duties: besides, it will be so jolly to knock about the world a little."

"Yes; and better still to knock about the Russians a great deal, eh? ha, ha!" lisped a languid Hussar officer, as he twirled his bandolined moustache and laughed at his own mild joke.

The transport was now clearing the Thames, and rounding the floating light on the sandbank that runs eastward from the Isle of Grain. The waters of the Medway opened wide upon her starboard beam, and as the setting sun shone through the golden haze, the buildings of the dockyard, the tall masts of the war-vessels in the great basin at Sheerness, and the outline of the guardship, came all darkly and minutely forward to the eye. A red flash and white puff of smoke from the black hull of the guardship caused all the loungers on the poop of the Blenheim to turn towards her.

"The evening gun," suggested one.

"Impossible," said another: "the sun is still high above the Essex marshes."

"What's the row yonder?" asked the Hussar, languidly; "the guardship has hoisted a signal at her main?"

The evening was beautiful; the poop was crowded with officers in their shell jackets, or undress uniform, and the air was redolent of cigars of all kinds; their men grouped amidships were looking at the fast-receding shore; others at the cat-heads, were gazing wistfully seaward, and some at the passing craft, bearing up Thames from every quarter of the globe, and all were merry, heedless, and thoughtless of the future that was before them.

"What the deuce is up?" was now the general exclamation, as the steamer slackened her speed, and drew in shore nearer to the point of Sheerness.

"What is the signal?" asked Ponsonby.

"Red, blue, and yellow—nautical, perhaps; enigmatical, certainly," said the Hussar.

"Some fellow on board has got his swell friends in town to telegraph for him at the last moment, to come back with the pilot-boat, perhaps," suggested Ponsonby.

"Urgent private affairs—that his book on Coutts' is all square; that his uncle is dead, the will is all right, and that he'd better return to mamma."

"Hush, gentlemen," said a grave old Captain of the Rifles, who perhaps was thinking of his wife and little ones. "We shall soon learn what is wrong."

"There is nothing wrong, sirs," said the Captain, testily, from the bridge; "but the guard-ship has signalled that we

are to lie to for a boat from the shore ; and here it comes, hand over hand," he added, as a man-o'-war gig, with its oars feathered in beautiful and steady regularity, came sheering out from the basin direct for the transport, which lay heaving and plunging slowly on the heavy ground swell.

Meanwhile that distinguished officer Chesters had been left in the cabin alone to "soak over his wine," as he phrased it, for he was constitutionally and systematically a deep drinker. Amid all the quiet insolence and tipsy banter in which he had indulged, no sentiment of regret or pity for the poor girl whose interests he might have served, but to whom he had wrought so much mischief, and whose terrible sorrow he had witnessed, occurred to the callous and hollow-hearted Chesters. But he had peculiar and regretful thoughts of her, nevertheless.

"Had I possessed but more tact and time, to have waited a little till her confinement had broken her spirit and dulled her perceptions ; had I pressed her more tenderly perhaps, during that last interview ; or had I spoken favourably of her to that old pump of an Alderman, she might have been mine—mine, by this time ! Now, descending fast from scale to scale in misery and degradation, her noble qualities, for she has them, wasted ; her pure sentiments dulled, her affections blasted, her perils equalled only by her beauty, she may become the prey—the facile prey of *others* !"

And he gnawed his yellow moustache and bit his thin cruel lip at the galling idea. Had he only traduced and repudiated her, to the end that she might become the prize—the prey of some person unknown ? Jealousy became a keen pang, but the waters were rolling between them now, and every revolution of the inexorable screw—and now it suddenly occurred to him that the motion thereof had ceased, and he was just about to come on deck and have another bout of banter with Ramornie, when Lieutenant Elton, who acted as adjutant of the various detachments, placed in his hand a long official letter, which he tore open in haste and surprise.

It was from the Quartermaster-General, informing Major Chesters, that Lieutenant-Colonel Louis De la Fosse of the 34th Regiment, Infantry of the French Line, having come to London on a special mission from Marshal St. Arnaud, would have a free passage on board H.M.S. *Blenheim* to Varna ; and it was trusted that as a stranger and officer of the allied army, all courtesy and attention should be shown to him during the voyage.

"The devil ! De la Fosse !" muttered Chesters, changing colour. "Where is this fellow, Elton ? this Frenchman ?"

"He is here," replied Elton, as a very handsome man about forty years of age, with regular features, curly hair, a long dark

moustache and closely-shaven chin, in the blue uniform and gold epaulettes of the French Line, with a few orders glittering at his scarlet lapelles, his little kepi in one hand and his sabre in the other, entered the cabin and bowed low to Chesters, who returned the courtesy, but with a coldness and restraint that were as marked as the surprise and hauteur that immediately spread over the face of the other, when his open and pleasant smile passed away, and he recognised the man he looked on.

CHAPTER XLV.

THE VOYAGE.

"COLONEL DE LA FOSSE, I bid you welcome to her Majesty's ship *Blenheim*," said Chesters, presenting his hand, which, however, the Frenchman did not take, but contented himself with another bow and a very perceptible elevation of his black eyebrows. "I have also to congratulate you on promotion since—"

"Since when, monsieur?"

"We last met."

"Ah!" said the other a little contemptuously, "I thank you. I have just been in time to reach your vessel; the telegram left London this forenoon, about the same time I quitted it by rail; and here I am."

"So we are to have the pleasure of voyaging together so far as Varna."

"So far—yes," replied the Frenchman, shrugging his shoulders, and causing the bullion of his epaulettes to glitter, whilst his face said so plainly that he saw little pleasure in the companionship that Elton laughed behind his forage cap.

"Will you eat anything? the messman will bring you partridge pie and *pâtés de foie gras*."

"No, thank you."

"The wine is here," said Chesters; "shall I assist you?"

"Thanks; I shall help myself. What is this? St. Julien!—très bon!" and the Colonel took a bumper of wine, without according a smile or a glance to Chesters, who felt far from comfortable as several officers had left the deck, all anxious to converse with the stranger, and be attentive to him. But after seeing to his berth on board, and having his baggage arranged by a Fusileer, who was to act as his servant during the voyage, he lit a cigar and went on deck without bestowing the faintest bow on Chesters, who bit his lip, and muttered something under his breath.

The *Blenheim* was under full steam now; the wind was fair for her down channel; her top-sails and topgallant-sails were

sheeted home ; the Isle of Sheppey was sinking fast upon her starboard quarter, and the bugles having ere this sounded the tattoo, save by the watch under a subaltern officer the main deck was deserted. The French colonel was of course the centre of attraction, and a group gathered round him. The stiffness and restraint, even hauteur of manner he exhibited in the cabin, passed away completely now, and he chatted gaily and freely on the chances of the war, and spoke with a Frenchman's hereditary hate of Russia and the Russians, for the Gaul has never forgiven Moscow. He expatiated on the sufferings undergone by the armies at Varna, and denounced as criminal the conduct of our Ministry in waiting only for winter to begin the campaign. He spoke lightly of his own past military experience, but would seem to have seen some sharp service in Algeria in the regiment of General Bazaine ; he had been side by side with Canrobert in the breach of Constantine, and had served as a volunteer with the 3rd Chasseurs à Pied, in the terrible conflict at the Pass of Djerma, where the Arabs were totally routed and their principal sheiks captured.

"Monsieur le Major, who commands you," said he during a pause, "has *he* seen much of the world?"

"I should say a deuced deal too much—for my taste at least," replied Ponsonby, caressing his whiskers.

"Ah—but in the way of military service, I mean?"

"A little in India," said Horace Ramornie. "I don't think you seem to like him much."

"Sacre Dieu ! no. I should think not," replied de la Fosse, tipping the ashes off his cigar.

"To me it is like a dream that I have heard of you and him having met in Scotland."

"In Scotland," repeated the Frenchman, who spoke English very fairly ; "you are but a youth—from whom did you hear of that?"

"From my uncle, Sir John Wedderburn, of Willowdean."

"What do I hear—you a relation of Sir Wedderburn, who was so very kind to me?"

"I am his nephew."

"Mon Dieu !" The Frenchman shook the hand of Horace with great cordiality, and drew him a little way aside.

"And Madame Wedderburn—how is she?"

"Well—I thank you."

"I was a captain then, at the time you refer to—home after the expedition to Morocco—travelling in Scotland, of which the Walter Scottish novels had made me enthusiastic. (Horace smiled at the compound word.) I met this Monsieur Chesters, who pressed me to have a little shooting in Berwickshire. I went there—no shooting at all ; it was all one humbugs ! play,

play, play : écarté, hazard, vingt-un, and so on, till I was left without a centime, and but for your kind uncle, to whom my case became known, I should never have reached France again, never have seen my regiment, never have been now, as I am, Colonel of the 34th Infanterie de Ligne ; for even my watch and rings I had staked at his table and lost, among them a valuable onyx, that belonged to one of my ancestors, and which I see he has the bad taste now to wear ; consequently, I have no particular favour for M. Chesters. And now that we have met again, I would call him out," he added through his clenched teeth, while a fierce gleam came into his black eyes ; "yes ! and force him to fight me on the first land we see ; but then, mal-pesté ! I know that Marshal St. Arnaud would resent on me severely a quarrel with any British officer at the present juncture ; so I most dissemble, if I can, till I find him among that rabble the Turkish Contingent, when I may shoot him, begar ! with a safe conscience, under pretended belief that he was a Turk !"

The first few days of the voyage passed pleasantly enough ; the weather was fine, and when the few duties incident to a troop-ship, such as the parade of the men in their canvas frocks and of the quarter-guard for bayonet duty, on the poop, fore-castle, and scuttle-butt, were over, idling, smoking, single-stick, revolver practice at the passing birds, or at a bottle slung from a yardarm, and too often gambling, became the mode of passing the time.

Gaming is strictly prohibited in transports as in camp or quarters ; but the evil example of Chesters speedily infected the younger officers, who, as they all belonged to different corps, and would be separated on landing, had little interest in each other personally ; so if the tedious monotony of the voyage was partially dispelled by the excitement of gaming, they cared nothing for the monetary risk they ran, and kept up a cross-fire of I O U's, that would rather have astonished their parents and guardians ; and were all the more free with these from the knowledge that ere long they must be before the enemy, and a bullet might pay off the heaviest score. Thus every evening, after the mess-table was cleared, cards and dice made their appearance regularly, and large sums were staked and lost or won, to the manifest deterioration of discipline and good-feeling ; and all this was caused solely by Chesters, whose special office and duty it was to have repressed the practice at once, instead of becoming a leader in it : but this cosmopolitan Scot was "a gambler for gain : that foul amalgam of the miser and the knave." This state of matters continued to increase until the evening after the transport entered the Mediterranean, when a very unpleasant fracas took place. The weekly parade of all the troops on board in full dress and in heavy marching order

had just occurred, and the soldiers had been dismissed to rack their arms and resume their free and easy canvas frocks, when the Bay of Gibraltar, glittering under a clear and brilliant sunshine, opened on the port bow of the *Blenheim*, as she steamed onward between lovely Andalusia on one side, and the black mountains of arid Tetuan on the other, gliding past the shores of Europe and Africa into one of the greatest water-highways of the world. In outline a couchant lion, starting there to the height of fifteen hundred feet from the pale blue ocean, that seemed to ripple in gold and silver against its base, the Rock of immortal memories, terminated in the ruin known as O'Hara's Tower, on which the British flag was flying in the distance diminished to a speck. The *Blenheim* did not run close in, but steamed steadily onward into the Mediterranean, and as the vast citadel began to lessen on her quarter it seemed to all as if they had seen but a glimpse, and a passing vision it certainly was—of gardens of brilliant green; terraced houses of dazzling whiteness, with sunshaded windows; batteries bristling with uncounted guns, and dotted by redcoats whose bayonets glittered like stars; cliffs honeycombed into galleries and perforated by round holes, through which grim cannon peered, and, below all, the bay full of shipping, where the variegated flags of all the nations of the maritime world were fluttering in the breeze of a pleasant August afternoon.

There were special orders that unless stores were required she was not to touch at Gibraltar, so, to the disappointment of many, the *Blenheim* held on her course. Horace experienced this in particular; but several officers on board had been quartered there before, and cared less about it.

"Were you ever stationed in old Gib?" asked Elton of Ponsonby.

"No; never. And shouldn't care much to be cooped up between the bay and the Spanish lines."

"Old Gib is not without his amusements, and I have twice had a run with the Calpe hounds," said Chesters, who was well up in all kinds of field sports. "The meet always takes place at San Roque, six miles from the Rock on the Andalusian side."

"You can scarcely have it six miles from the Rock on the other side," said Colonel De la Fosse, twirling his moustaches.

Chesters frowned, but resumed: "People don't usually course in the sea, Colonel. The last time I rode yonder, after we had a dose of milk-punch at the nearest posada, the fox broke cover at the end of the Malaga Garden, and away we went powdering along at a rasping pace. We had a devil of a run over the most awful ground in the world—the Stony Road they name it there, and by Jove, it is stony with a vengeance, being a slope at the angle of forty-five degrees, covered with

thousands of cart loads of rocks, boulders and loose *débris* that have fallen from the mountain above; but across it we went with a whoop and a cheer, some eighty riders or more, all in red, for no true born Briton can either hunt or fight comfortably in any other colour; and if any of the 12th fellows were there, you might be sure to hear them shouting '*Montis Insignia Calpe!*' because that motto is on their colours with the castle and key. I can almost make out the coursing ground from here with my glass, though the old Rock is sinking fast astern. I had I remember a strange bet there, with Bob Riversdale, a staff surgeon——"

"And you won it?" asked De la Fosse drily.

"Yes."

"Aha, begar, I thought so—I'm sorry for Monsieur Bob," said the Frenchman, whose manner made the speaker colour with anger, while Horace turned away wearily, for he was heartily tired of Chesters' everlasting topics, horses and gambling dice and cards; so he followed the Frenchman, who proceeded to the taffrail; there a few officers were leaning over it, smoking and keeping their eyes fixed on the fast receding pillars of Hercules, which were defined in dark outline against the sky, and melting into the evening sea, which was all aflame with the amber and crimson tints of the setting sun.

A young officer in a shell jacket with bright yellow facings, politely touched his cap, and made way for the French Colonel.

"Thanks, Monsieur,—do not allow me to disturb you," said the latter; "ah—pardon," he added, as he took a button of the other's uniform between his fingers; "you belong to the 34th of the Line—my own Number!"

"Yes, Monsieur le Colonel," said the young Ensign, proudly; "ours is the Cumberland Regiment, and was raised in 1702."

"'Albuhera,' 'Arroya del Molinos,'" continued the Colonel, reading the motto on the button. "I could tell you a good story about your Regiment and mine, when my father, the Marquis De la Fosse, commanded the latter in that very battle of Arroya del Molinos in Spanish Estremadura, in the brave old war of the Peninsula, that we are forgetting all about now.

"In that little village, which is situated in a plain that was then quite covered with wild laurels and mignonette, and at the base of a ridge of rocks that start abruptly up in the form of a crescent, the whole Regiments comprising the division of Marshal Gerard, when getting under arms amid the rain and mist of a dark morning, were suddenly surrounded and attacked by the troops of Sir Rowland Hill, who had made a forced march for that purpose from Alcuesca. To be brief, they were nearly all taken to a man by your people, and my father fell from his horse severely wounded. The French had to form

two squares and began to retreat, when suddenly there was a shout of—

“Voilà, les baionettes Ecossais !” and one square was entirely cut off by a Regiment of Highlanders, who dashed at it out of the mist. The other, which was chiefly composed of the 34th of the Line, under the Chef de Bataillon, my father—now sorely wounded and afoot—was surrounded by the British 34th, and he told me that in the grey light of the breaking day each Regiment simultaneously recognised the other's *number* on their shakos, and the French officers as they tendered their swords to those of your corps, exclaimed—

“Voilà, messieurs—nous sommes des frères, nous sommes du trente-quatrième régiment tous deux ! Les Anglais se battent toujours avec loyauté, et traitent bien leurs prisonniers !”

“The sword of my father was returned to him by the commander of your regiment, who politely said something about ‘les malheurs de la Guerre,’ and the fighting ended.”

“It is quite true, Monsieur le Colonel,” replied Hunton, the young officer, smiling ; “for at the Head quarters of our regiment, we still possess the brass drums, and the drum-major's staff of the French 34th, and if I ever have, as I hope, the pleasure of presenting you to our mess, you shall see them under more pleasant auspices than the Marquis your father last saw them.* But now that we are allies, are not such memories better forgotten ?”

And now we have to record the less agreeable portion of our story, already referred to.

CHAPTER XLVI.

UN BON COUP D'ÉPÉE.

As the troops on board were divided into three watches, there were always about a hundred men on deck at a time exclusive of the seamen. On this evening, Horace was subaltern of the watch, and as such, was solitary on the poop, while his men, muffled in their grey great coats, trod to and fro on the main deck, or lounged between the guns on each side, for the transport was partially armed.

As the evening deepened into night, the stars came brilliantly out in the blue sky of the Mediterranean ; the atmosphere was calm and serene ; the wind light, but fair, and the great troopship, with its living freight, glided silently and swiftly on the watery path, with its three great lanterns, green to starboard,

* This military coincidence is an historical fact.

crimson to port, and white at the foretop, emitting weird and strange gleams at times on the bellying sails, the lofty spars, and the passing waves. The time and place were very conducive to thought and reflection, and undisturbed by the laughter, exclamations and other sounds that issued occasionally from the great cabin, where wine or brandy and water, dice and cards were the order of the evening, Horace Ramornie gave himself up to the solitude of the sea, and with a fragrant havannah in his mouth, leaned over the taffrail, watching the white and phosphorescent sparkle of the vessel's wake, as the water boiled and bubbled in two eddies under each counter, to meet in one around the propelling screw.

Horace had certain unpleasant forebodings that Chesters would yet work him some mischief, in the spirit of his feud with Cyril Wedderburn, and the fear of this grew strong within him, together with a loathing of the man; for his commission and his honour were the young man's sole inheritance now, and he knew that despite the sword and epaulettes which gave Chesters the rank of field-officer in the Turkish Contingent, he was a reckless desperado; so this dread conflicted with the solemn thoughts that occurred to him, as they do to most thinking men, while at sea in the silent night, when the clear stars are reflected in the passing waves, and strange phosphorescent lights seem to glide mysteriously under the bosom of the vast and shadowy deep.

And soft and tender memories came of his Gwendoleyne—memories blended with "the perfect love that casteth out fear." She loved him well, he knew, though their mutual aunt knew it not, for both were aware of her *wish*; and Horace blushed to himself as he thought of a sentence in a novel which Lady Wedderburn had once read to him rather pointedly, and which was to the effect, "that disproportion of fortune was an insurmountable barrier to married happiness; that the sense of perfect equality in condition was the first requisite of that self-esteem which must be the basis of an affection untrammelled from all unworthy considerations."

If he fell in the coming strife how long would Gwenny sorrow for him? Long, he was assured: but sorrow cannot endure for ever. Time consoled all, and soothed all, even as it avenged all things; and others would come who would teach her to forget him, and perhaps—to love them. Aye, there was the rub, the gall and the bitterness; and his whole soul revolted at the idea that when he was lying forgotten in his foreign grave, amid the festering heap in some battle-trench, another might gather in his arms that Gwenny whose beauty was so sweet and tender, and whose heart as yet, was wholly his own!

Yet he would not have her to pine as one who had no hope

on earth. That would indeed be too selfish ; so with a sigh, he strove to thrust these thoughts away.

While thinking thus, eight-bells struck, and Hunton, of the 34th, whose duty it was to relieve him and take the middle-watch, which extends from midnight to eight in the morning, came promptly on deck to his post, while the old watch went below, and a hundred fresh soldiers in their great-coats and forage caps came thronging up the hatchway.

"You'll scarcely find the cabin so pleasant as the poop," said Hunton significantly, "for Chesters and Co. are at it again."

"I mean only to have a glass of sherry and a devilled biscuit from the messman, and then turn in," replied Ramornie, to whom the long and handsome saloon presented a very exciting scene as he entered it.

By the rules of Her Majesty's Service all lights in the fore part of a troop-ship are extinguished at eight o'clock P.M., save such as there are sentinels posted over ; even the lights of the officers aft are put out by ten. The captain of this transport, an old master of the Royal Navy, had retired to his own cabin, leaving particular orders that "the lights were to be doused before the first hour of the middle watch was past ;" but by permission of Major Chesters, "the officer commanding," they were kept burning as long as there was a card to be turned, or a dice-box rattled.

Overcome by wine and excitement, some of the juniors had dozed off to sleep on the sofas and cushioned lockers. Two were singing, and others were arguing noisily as to the place where the troops would probably make their landing against the Russians—if they ever landed at all. Some were offering and booking ridiculous bets, for the evil example of Chesters was painfully prominent now. The wine decanters had passed freely and frequently round, and as a result, the clamour of voices rose at times to a most unseemly and discordant din ; but fortunately, laughter and fun were predominant, for most of those present were heedless subalterns, lads fresh from Eton, Sandhurst, or Harrow.

Chesters was seated at a table playing vingt-un with young Elton, whom he had lured or taunted into gambling with him, and whose face, alternately flushed or pale as he won—which was seldom—or lost, which was frequently, presented a strange contrast to that of his bloated adversary, or to the placid aspect of Colonel De la Fosse, who, while catching the turns of the game with an eye expressive of disdain, leaned quietly against the foot of the mizen mast, with a half-lit cigar between his fingers, and muttered to Horace as he passed some thing about "*le régiment de la Calotte*" (i.e., madmen).

Horace had been at sea in troop-ships ere now. In one he

had gone round the Cape to India ; but never before had he beheld a scene like this at such an hour in any vessel in her Majesty's Service ; it was so entirely subversive of discipline and good feeling.

"Here comes Ramornie from the deck, looking as usual, cool as a cucumber, rather reprehensively perhaps, too," said Chesters, mockingly ; "will you join us, and have a little mild play, 'to improve the shining hour?'"

"I would rather be excused, Major. I never gamble," replied Horace.

"Ah, you have no small vices. You, then, Ponsonby?"

"Play with *you*?" replied Ponsonby, who had imbibed sufficient wine to make him exceedingly rash, "not if I know it!"

"Why so?" asked Chesters with knitted brows.

"Can't afford it ; that is why," replied the Welsh Fusileer, coolly.

"You have grown cautious?"

"No. But you are always so deuced lucky with the honours, and when the ship rolls, do exactly what you please with the kings and aces."

"A home-thrust, egad!" said Elton bitterly, for he had been losing fast.

"I'll have a turn with you, Major," said a little tipsy ensign, stepping up from a sofa.

"I don't bet with boys under age."

"But you play with them, and to some purpose," retorted the lad angrily.

Chesters darted a furious glance at the speaker (who returned it by an unabashed stare), and then he proceeded to sort and shuffle the pack of cards anew, prior to determining the deal.

"Mon ami," whispered Louis De la Fosse to Elton at this juncture ; "beware of him whom you play with. I know him of old ; he is one of the luckiest fellows in the world."

"How?"

"He is ever a winner, always cool, always quiet and observant, and seems to possess the eyes of Argus instead of two."

"What is all that whispering about?" asked Chesters, with suspicion.

"You, Monsieur," replied the Colonel, so quietly that the blotches on the Major's face deepened in colour.

"A knave! the deal is mine," said he. "My transactions with *you*, Colonel De la Fosse, if it is these you refer to, were a trifle compared to my single affair with Prince Galitzin, the Russian Attaché at Paris."

"They were serious enough for me, any way, Monsieur."

"I won eight thousand pounds odd, at a sitting ; we played

vingt-un, this very game. But then he owned more roubles and Russian peasants than he could well reckon."

Elton was still losing fast, and the exasperation of his temper, the pallor of his face, his straining eyes and general disorder of aspect, became painfully apparent, while the bead drops of perspiration glittered on his temples.

"You had better abandon vingt-un," said Horace. "The run of luck is against you, my dear fellow; or won't you turn in, the hour is waxing late."

"Early, rather," replied Elton to this advice, which was rashly given, so far as the giver was concerned, for Chesters immediately said in a threatening tone—

"What the devil do you mean, sir, by interfering with us? By what right do you permit yourself to do so?"

"The right accorded by friendship and kindness."

"Attend to your own affairs, sir. You've not had much experience of life, my young friend; but like mild, trashy Cape Madeira, you'll improve by a sea voyage, I hope."

Horace kept his temper by an effort, or felt himself compelled to do so, and turned away towards the rudder-case, recalling the fears he had fancied, and the wise resolutions he had formed on deck to avoid this dangerous man; but a loud laugh elicited by some remark of the latter, from the tipsy ensign—a remark in which he heard his own name mentioned, drew him again to the table near the mizen mast.

"And you came home with her over land?" he heard Chesters say.

"Yes, by Jove I did," replied the boy.

"She is a girl with a thundering lot of money in Indian stock, bonds, a palace in the Choultry, and the deuce knows all what more. I suppose Ramornie can tell us all about it."

"Of whom are you talking, sir?" asked Horace.

"Wedderburn's cousin—the Madras girl."

"That subject again, Major Chesters?" said Horace, absolutely trembling with passion, for there was a deliberate and languid insolence in the other's tone that maddened him.

"You should not find it an unpleasant one," said Chesters, still mockingly. "A girl worth her weight in gold; in fact, her weight in mohurs and rupees."

"A la belle millionaire!" said De la Fosse, smiling, as if to preserve good humour. "If beauty be the test, parbleu! every girl I saw in England is worth her weight in guineas."

"They say she is to marry Wedderburn of the Royal Fusiliers," continued Chesters, resolutely bent on insulting Ramornie. "Ha, ha! but many a fellow will be run to earth ere we return again, and why not Wedderburn among the rest? He may go to

Old Scratch with the *down* train, for a hotter place than Varna, and have no return ticket."

"Sir, I appeal to all those present, if this is not a most brutal jest?" exclaimed Horace, now as white with passion as Elton was with his losses.

"This to me, sir?" exclaimed Chesters, starting up. "I am a gentleman——"

"By the courtesy of the turf."

"I am a Major of the Turkish Contingent!"

"Much that is to boast of," replied Horace, whose voice was tremulous with rage and scorn.

"Look you, young fellow," said Chesters, in a bullying tone, "hitherto, so far as you have been concerned, I have been holding my stride——"

"Sir, I am a gentleman; neither a jockey, nor a groom, consequently your phraseology——"

"Is obscure, you would say?"

"Yes."

"Then, by Jove, I'll make it plain enough to you. I am your superior officer, and as such I order you under arrest; aye, close arrest in your cabin. Mr. Elton, as acting adjutant, receive Mr. Ramornie's sword. At Malta or Varna he shall figure before a general court martial."

Ramornie, little foreseeing the use to which it would soon be put, handed his sword and belt without a word to Elton, and bestowing on Chesters a glance of supreme disdain, retired to his cabin, but in such a mood of mind as the reader may conceive.

This untoward affair caused a chill, a gloom to fall on all present, and they formed little groups to whisper over the probable result of it.

"And now to finish our game, Elton," said Chesters, coolly reseating himself. "We have but a few minutes only, ere the lights must positively be put out. Where were we?"

"I scarcely remember," sighed Elton, who had already lost stake after stake, and given I O U's to a considerable amount, for to him, as a younger son, the losses he had sustained were ruinous, and he despaired of retrieving his fortune.

Colonel De la Fosse, who had beheld the scene between Chesters and Ramornie with silent indignation, now proceeded closely to watch the conclusion of the game between the former and Elton; and while humming a French air, he had taken up Ramornie's sword, drawn it from the scabbard, and with apparent curiosity was examining the edge, and more particularly the *point* of it.

As dealer, Chesters turned up a *vingt-un* with wonderful celerity and success on every occasion. And at last poor Elton, pale as death, with bloodshot eyes, trembling hands, and clammy

brow, placed his last stake, a very heavy one, upon his *last* chance ! But Chesters might still have a fatal *twenty-one*, and thus rook him completely !

The hand, on a finger of which the latter still wore the large onyx ring he had the bad taste to win in former days from De la Fosse, was spread out on the table somewhat ostentatiously ; and on this hand, or on the ring, the keen dark eyes of the Frenchman were fixed as if by some strange fascination. On the stone was engraved a gauntlet on a sword's point. All who were sober stood hushed in silence round them, their eyes fixed alternately on Elton's excited face and the fatal cards which roused such evil passions, when suddenly an exclamation escaped the watchful Frenchman.

"*Imposteur ! Mon Dieu—un 'imposteur—ah, pitiful carabina-
binade !*" and he dashed the sharp point of Ramornie's sword between the second and third fingers of Chesters' outspread hand, which he instantly and instinctively withdrew ; and then was seen by all an ACE, which he had concealed beneath it, for purposes of his own—the ace being always reckoned as one or eleven according to the exigencies of the holder's play—pinned to the table by the steel weapon !

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CHAPTER XLVII.

UNDER ARREST.

MEANWHILE Horace Ramornie was in his little cabin (nearly one half of which was filled by a 24-pounder), ignorant of the strange event that had transpired in the saloon ; and anticipating only the evils, the affront, and shame of a court-martial, before which he knew not in what artful fashion the charge of Chesters might be framed against him ; and in which, perhaps, spitefully, and for the mere purpose of annoyance, the name of Gwendoleyne Wedderburn might appear as the cause of quarrel, and this itself might ruin him with her for ever.

Knowing but too well that for the maintenance of discipline, the authorities at the Horse Guards generally supported—even to injustice, seniors against juniors—he passed the hours that remained of the morning in a most unhappy mood, fearing that ruin stared him in the face, and resolving—for he was full of desperate and bitter thoughts—that if he were cashiered, he would join some regiment as a volunteer, if permitted, and still serve, to perish, if he won not honour, in the war !

What would Sir Edward Elton and the regiment—those Royal Fusileers, of whom he was so proud to be one, and

among whom he was so well thought of—say, when they heard of his being placed under arrest, close arrest too, a double degradation, when on his way out to the seat of war, for an unmeaning gambling row (such it *might* be called) with his senior officer?

Gweny and the Wedderburns too! His heart grew sick when he thought of her and of them; the disappointment his good uncle must feel; the indignation of Lady Wedderburn and Cyril; and the cold, legal, and reprehensive comments of Robert. So his ideas became a mere tumult, a chaos of rage; for the catastrophe his fears foreshadowed had come to pass sooner than he expected.

Separated from Ramornie only by a bulkhead or two, Chesters was in his more spacious cabin, in a frame of mind that was still more unenviable; for he had yet the hollow and conventional feeling of honour, or knew the necessity of affecting to have it, for outward purposes. As to what people at home might say he cared little, for there he was forgotten by all, save his creditors; but here, in the Allied Army, he would have to face exposure, disgrace, and, too probably, a court-martial, if not summary dismissal from the Turkish Contingent; for even the singularly recruited ranks of the Bashi Bazooks might decline to receive him.

Deep were the blasphemies against Fate, and bitter the curses against Louis De la Fosse that fell from his lips! He drank brandy and seltzer water as if he had a consuming fire within him; his features, all save the grog-blotches, were pale and livid; his hands trembled and moved by convulsive twitches—all the more so when a message came from the Frenchman, through young Elton.

"Tell him, Monsieur le Lieutenant," said the former to the latter, cuttingly, "that I can neither be bullied nor jockeyed like some of his boy ensigns; and that I will fight with sword or pistol, or both, on the first land we sight, even were it no larger than this table."

"Something must be done," replied the rather bewildered Elton; "but I fear arrest also, if I become the bearer of a challenge. Duelling is fairly put down in our service."

"But not in ours. People cant and talk of steam and telegraphy, of progress and civilization, but the science of human destruction keeps pace with them, for human nature never changes. We shall never be without crime and passion. And tell this man—if he is not what I should blush to call any man who wears an epaulette?—I shall fight him, if he will come, a *duel à mort*, though I fear that my old comrade, St. Arnaud, would resent such a *fracas*. And yet he does not always keep his own temper under control. *Mon Dieu!* I was close by his

side on that terrible morning in the Tuileries, when General Cormeneuse accused him of extracting a valuable document from the portfolio of Napoleon; and before one of us could speak, the sword of St. Arnaud was plunged to the hilt in his heart."

Chesters strove again and again to write an insulting acceptance of the challenge from the Frenchman, but his fingers failed to guide the pen. And when he remembered that, too probably, not an officer on board the troopship would become his messenger or second, he dashed his desk against the cannon in his cabin, with blind and impotent wrath.

A jockey, a gambler, a *roué*, he had never before been so openly and publicly stripped of the character of "gentleman;" and now he knew and felt himself to be exposed, lost, disgraced, perhaps beyond redemption, and all through the means of that quiet, stern, and observant Frenchman, whom he resolved that he would yet shoot like a dog, if he had the opportunity. How he loathed and literally cursed him! Well, if he escaped dismissal, which he could scarcely hope, he should in future scrupulously avoid his own countrymen, and fraternize with the Orientals—perhaps turn Turk altogether, like the Croat, Omar Pasha; for this gambling scrape would not, he conceived, injure him much in the estimation of Osmanli officers, whom he knew to be but an indifferent set of fellows, often originally the *azancoglans*, or men who do the meaner offices of the Seraglio, or attendants of the pashas, such as *tiruaktzys* (nail cutters), carpet-spreaders, *chiboukçis* or pipe-bearers, and so forth. But being literally covered with merited shame, he became seriously ill, and his uninterrupted libations of brandy increased his ailment, so that a few hours saw him in a raging fever and placed on the sick-list.

The next officer in command, a Captain of the Rifle Brigade, ignoring alike his past authority and the whole affair, released Horace from arrest, and restored to him his sword. The incident, however ugly, had a salutary influence among the youngsters. Dread of a court of inquiry still existed; so the gambling in the cabin ceased, and a vast number of bets were cancelled, and I O U's that had been interchanged were, by mutual consent, destroyed, torn to pieces, and sent whirling over to leeward.

To do him justice, amid all the contempt he had for his character, the soldierly Louis De la Fosse felt some pity on learning that Chesters was so crushed in spirit.

"My own life has not been always *couleur de rose*," said he to Ramornie, as they promenaded on deck one evening, while the little green coloured isle of Pantellaria, with Il Bosco, its volcanic cone, were faintly visible on their weather beam; "it has been cloudy enough at times—such as that when this same

Chesters reduced me to the verge of starvation and despair; and when for months I was a prisoner among the Arabs in the mountains of Auress, which look down on the sandy waste of Sahara, and when every morning I had the pleasant anticipation of dislocation of the neck, by having my head twisted one way and my body another, like a pigeon in a poulterer's shop. *Ma foi ! un bon coup d'épée* I have struck many a time, but for you young fellows, the best I ever struck was that with your sword blade through yonder trickster's hidden card !"

Save through the surgeon on board, nothing was known of Chesters, who only began to recover his senses one evening when he could see through the open port-hole near his bed the waves careering past before the pleasant breeze that fanned his throbbing brow, and land visible a few miles off; but he gazed at it dreamily, for what shore it proved he knew little, and cared less.

The ocean was all of a very light blue; but the bases of the mountains were of a dark indigo tint, while their peaks were tipped with crimson and purple, as they started in outline against a sky of gold and amber, that gradually turned to fiery red as the sun went down behind the land. Then blending tints of opal and crimson began to steal across the sea; while darkness deepened on the shore of Sicily, for such it was, and the cape—some call it the isle—which terminated near Passaro. The chargers were whinnying on board as they gladly snuffed the land—the Pachynum Promontorium of the classic ages; but it might have been the coast of Bulgaria or of Baffin's Bay for all that Chesters cared, as he closed his blood-shot eyes, and dozed wearily off in slumber.

When next morning he awoke a little calmer, and looked forth once more, he knew instantly where he was. Around the open port-hole swarmed a flotilla of little boats, full of tawny, black-haired and keen-eyed men and lads, almost in a state of nudity, looking like great monkeys as they clamoured for money to be thrown over, that they might dive for it. He recognised the streets of stairs ascending to the Strada Reale; the solid batteries rising tier above tier, and bristling with a thousand cannon over the freestone rocks, on which the glittering sea was dashing; the Cathedral of St. John, where the keys of the Holy Cities hang; the Castle of St. Elmo; the harbour full of shipping, chiefly war vessels and transports, crowded with troops, the boats in hundreds shooting to and fro, full of seamen and marines, food and warlike stores, coals, powder, shot, and cannon. He heard the occasional drum and bugle-call in the garrison, and the tolling of those solemn bells that whilom had rung for mass and prayer in Rhodes; and as

Chesters turned wearily in his bed, he knew that the *Blenheim* swung at her moorings in the harbour of Valetta.

A great French line-of-battle ship, the *Ville de Paris*, crowded with Zouaves, lay near her. They were swarming about her decks, and even out upon her booms, laughing, singing, and chattering like marmosets, in their short blue jackets and baggy red breeches, and ever and anon their long brass trumpets rang shrilly out upon the ambient air.

For all these he had no eyes: he was feverish, and though, in a moral sense, not naturally courageous, at that moment he actually longed for death. He could remember his father, a gallant and irreproachable veteran officer, whose ideas of honour were based on the old military school, when men entered the service, not as a lounge, but for the duration of their lives, and when the standard maxims were, never to give, but never to *take* an insult, and to be ever prompt with your pistol! He could recall this fine old officer, scarred with many an honourable wound, his breast decorated with the medals he had won in Egypt, at Corunna, and Waterloo, commanding his regiment in yonder citadel of Valetta; and he felt that if the dead are conscious, his father would be regarding him with sorrow, if not with shame!

And shame and rage Chesters felt keenly, but no dread of the future and no regret for a misspent past; no thought of reformation for the time to come, and short enough that might be. He was devoid of all religion, yet, strange to say, not entirely destitute of a species of superstition; and in times of danger, was wont to recall with confidence the prediction of a gipsy woman at Yetholm, who, when he crossed her hand with silver, had predicted, "That he should neither be drowned, nor die a violent death—yet that he should not die in a bed, as his father had done."

So he began to gather a little hope. He might survive the present disgrace, and be a Bimbashi or Colonel yet—ay, a Pasha with two tails, or a Brigadier; and thus, while trembling in his heart lest the late affair should recall fully to memory the half-forgotten play-transaction, in which his name was once involved before, compelling him to quit the Queen's service, he schemed, in fancy, out the future.

The saloon of the great ship was empty, voiceless, and he knew that every officer who was not on duty would be on shore, to see the wonders of Malta, to smoke cigars at the Auberge de Provence, have tiffin with sliced melons and Maltese oranges at Spark's in the Strada San Paoli, and a donkey ride as far as Monte Benjemma, or the wood of Boschetto, where the knights of St. John kept their game of old, for he had done all that himself in happier and more innocent days.

Suspense and hope, the heaven and the hell of the systematic gambler, he had endured and triumphed over; but to be pointed at by the finger of scorn, for what he had been discovered to be—he, who had alternately bullied or chaffed and rooked the boy-subs of his detachment—all proved too much, however, for the brain. The cognac was again appealed to in absence of the assistant-surgeon, and again a raging fever seized him.

He became oblivious of everything and everybody now, save his close attendant, Bill Trayner, whom he never failed to recognise, and to anathematize most freely—a circumstance which excited only a smile from that well-trained jockey, who was already looking to the reversion of his effects, and taking the opportunity of dividing the contents of a well-filled purse, with great fairness, between himself and his master, with whom he was left in charge, for when the *Blenheim* got up her steam for the Archipelago, Chesters was in the Military Hospital at Malta, where we shall gladly leave him to recover at leisure from the results of his own folly and debauchery.

It was generally supposed that he would die, or resign and slip quietly home; so, as if by common consent, the officers on board the troop-ship resolved to commit his story to oblivion.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

THE BRIDGE OF SIGHS.

ONE more brief glance at home, ere we find ourselves face to face with the disgusts of Varna, and the hostile columns of Russia.

Many, many weeks had passed away; and during these Mary Lennox knew nothing of what was passing in the outer world. She knew that busy world was there, beyond her prison—"the huge lock which shut her out from it," for during the monotonous hours of the day, and the drearier watches of the night between her intervals of sleep, she heard the hum of the vast multitudes around her—a hum that, though less at midnight than at noon, seemed never to become, even for an instant, still.

She was weary—wearily indeed of life; but felt too strong to hope that death was near her. In the morning she longed for night; and when night came she thanked God that another day of her dull pilgrimage had passed into eternity; and then she prayed for the oblivion of that sleep "which covereth a man all over like a mantle:" but sleep was not always forgetfulness, for sad dreams of the past and vague terrors for the future haunted her, till, one memorable evening, the chaplain and an official of the prison appeared with the startling tidings that she "was free!"

"Free, sir! How?" she asked, doubtfully.

"By the death in prison of the man against whom you were bound to appear. It is fortunate for you," added the chaplain, "as he confessed your perfect innocence."

"Poor wretch! I hope he made his peace with Heaven?"

"Can't say as he did, Miss. You see he died in a hurry," replied the warder.

And so it proved to be the case, that the miserable desperado, Ben Ginger, otherwise known to the public as "the Captain," was soon after found dead in his cell; whether of atrophy of the heart or by some secret agency of his own, the learned coroner and the intelligent jury, who viewed or sat over his remains, failed to elicit; but Mary was free.

"You may leave this, Miss Lennox, as soon as you choose," said the chaplain, with a smile of encouragement; "for you the gates of the prison are open at last, and the days of your bondage are over, I am happy to say."

Intolerable as the prison had been to her, she was not without fear of issuing forth once more into the vast human wilderness around it; yet she knew that the essay must be made, come what might of it, and like one in a dream, she put on her hat and shawl. Her garments were sorely worn now, and from black had turned to a kind of rusty-brown tint. Her purse was restored to her, and walking mechanically, she found herself at the strong iron-barred gates. The chaplain still accompanied her; but with that mistaken acuteness peculiar to some people, both he and the matron had their doubts about Mary; and the diamond ring on her "engaged finger" completed the measure of these.

"Where are you going to-night?" he asked, drily.

"As God may direct me. Would that it were to my father's grave at home," said she, as with trembling hands she tied her worn veil under her chin.

Those little hands were gloveless now, so their extreme whiteness and delicacy caught the observant chaplain's eye.

"Home; it is ever home you pine for," said he, kindly, but reprovingly; "why are you for ever looking back?"

"Because, sir, I dare not look *forward*," replied Mary, with a morose gloom of manner all unusual to her.

"Are you then as one who has no hope?" he asked, with folded hands.

"Yes, sir; one who has no hope here, at least," and her smooth white eyelids and long dark lashes drooped as she spoke.

A trite text or two suited to the occasion—a word of conventional advice were given, the wicket clanged behind her, and they had parted; he to repair to his snug little room, with its comforts and well-filled bookshelves, and Mary to wander

through the streets, aimlessly, and in a tumult of terrible thoughts. It was the month of September now, and darkness soon set in amid the dense and smoky thoroughfares of London.

The girl was in utter desperation and bewilderment, and walked on through the ceaseless throng and past the brilliantly-lighted shops, with the old stunned sensation that the whirl of omnibuses and other vehicles will always impart to those who are, as she was, country bred ; it came over her, all the more, perhaps, because latterly she had been secluded so long in utter solitude. Within her heart there was a sense of desolation that was fast becoming unendurable !

She had vague ideas of once more seeking the abode and advice of kind little Mrs. Long Primer, as the only being she knew in London ; and with this view inquired her way towards the Strand ; but was fast becoming weary, footsore, and in her agitation, oppressed with an intense thirst, which she knew not where to allay.

Alone, she feared to trust herself by night in a cab, and whither, or in what direction, those strings of gay, swift, and crowded omnibuses went she knew not. The Bank, Pimlico, Piccadilly or Paddington, Cornhill or Islington, conveyed no meaning to her ; and so she wandered on, enduring a horrible sensation of combined loneliness, emptiness, and gloom, finding herself at times in densely crowded thoroughfares, and at others in stately streets and squares, where the lights and music that came through the tall and draperied windows, the glimpses of rich dresses, of liveries in marble and pillared vestibules ; and where the carriages that rolled up to the doors with flashing lamps and glittering harness, bespoke wealth and luxury, gaiety and splendour.

Lady Wetherall might be in town now ; but dared she present herself at that great mansion in Piccadilly in such faded attire, and without her letter too ? The thing was not to be thought of !

And it had come to this at last !

“ Homeless, near a thousand homes she stood.”

Mary Lennox, so delicate and tender—so loving and true—so formed and calculated for home and home affections ! What a fate to be houseless and shivering in the busy streets of London, where the vast human tide went surging by, ceaselessly—ceaselessly, as it has done for centuries past, and shall do for centuries yet to come ; its very magnitude appalling her ; though she knew that under happier auspices, and with some protection, she would get used to it in time ; but at present she felt only a desperate longing for rest, for the face of a friend—a yearning for the safe solitude of that home she never more should see ; and she recalled now with vivid distinctness

all the terrible things said to her by Chesters, so cruelly and so artfully, of what her fate in life, and even after death, might be, if she died there friendless and unknown.

It was night in London now, but the pulses of the mighty city were throbbing still. In some streets the roll of carriages and the echo of hurrying feet had passed away ; but in the main arteries of the modern Babylon the full flood of life was flowing strongly as ever. Night or day seemed to make little difference in them.

Thus as Mary wandered aimlessly on, the strange combinations of extreme light and dense darkness, with the peculiar aspect that buildings and certain objects assume by night, all served to bewilder her more, and she remembered with growing terror the episodes of the last and only night she had ever been thus adrift in the streets at such an hour before.

To add to her extreme misery, rain began to fall, and came down with a heavy, steady, and apparently ceaseless determination. She was without cloak or umbrella, and was often compelled to take shelter in doorways and chilly passages, from which she was driven by men accosting her in terms of mock gallantry, or by policemen flashing their lanterns suspiciously into her eyes ; for she had a most rustic fear of those to whom she ought to have appealed for advice and protection. But all the little courage she ever possessed was gone now, and the poor girl, bred and reared as she had been, was as a child lost or astray in the streets of London.

The rain was still falling fast, and gusts of wind began to sweep the drenched thoroughfares and to ripple up the puddles and gorged gutters that reflected the gaslights. The atmosphere became murky as the smoke and soot of the countless chimneys were forced downwards by its density. Mary's clothing was wet and sodden now ; but in the terror and disorder of her mind, she was scarcely sensible of discomfort, for a man of suspicious aspect had been pertinaciously following her, and to escape him she ran onward till suddenly she found herself in an open space upon a great bridge, the double lamps of which were reflected in the wide river below.

It was the Thames, with all its bordering streets of stores and wharves, and its gathered fleets moored side by side, packed and densely, and yet so orderly.

Thousands of lights were gleaming across the murky bosom of the river, and through the open balustrade Mary looked at its current wistfully, thinking, as so many have thought, while lingering on that bridge of sighs, that there was peace—there an escape from all misery and sorrow.

She looked round her with a haggard eye ; in one place rose a square dark mass from out of the general obscurity ; in

another a vast dark shadowy dome, that seemed to shimmer amid the dusky haze. One was the Tower, the other St. Paul's ; and once more, sighing heavily, she bent her gaze on the turbid water. It flowed steadily, swiftly, and darkly onward—that mighty river—onward to the distant sea—but far down below her. Strange white things seemed to shine there in a lambent or phosphorescent light amid its rippling current. These objects made her shudder for a time and recoil. Then she looked at them steadily—it might be sternly. They were, she knew, only pieces of rag or rope, old hats, sailcloth, straw, or dead animals—and—“to be found drowned,” amid all these !

“Oh, no—oh, no ! God forgive me and guide me !” cried the girl, wildly. “Let me not think of *that*.”

She cast her eyes upwards as she prayed ; but no star caught her imploring eyes, and the fast falling rain plashed heavily on her pallid face and sodden tresses.

She remembered her father as he lay dead in the old wainscoted room at Lonewoodlee, calm, peaceful, and triumphant over the world and all its ills. But his was a death so different from what such as *this* would be.

“Now then, young ’ooman, wot air you hup to ?” said a voice, sharply, in her ear, startling her like a galvanic shock ; and a well-whiskered guardian of the night, in his felt helmet and dripping oilskin cape, confronted her.

“I am doing nothing, sir,” she faltered, and shrunk from him.

“Nothink ! Then you’d better come along with me. Prison, I think, is the place for such as you.”

“Prison !”

She uttered a wild despairing cry, and throwing herself over the balustrade, sank beneath the still, black current of the stream below !

The startled constable looked over, and as he sprang his rattle, saw something like a little hat and veil floating downward on the surface, but nothing more.

All seemed over !

CHAPTER XLIX.

THE VALE OF ALADYN.

By the time that Horace Ramornie with his detachment of the Fusileers reached Varna, and after a six hours’ march, joined the headquarters of his regiment, which was then encamped in the green and beautiful Vale of Aladyn, the magnificent army which had left the shores of Britain so full of hope, so high in ardour and spirit, by the gross mismanagement, the vacillation,

or something worse, on the part of the Home Government, had lain inactive and been literally decimated by disease, during the breathless months of a hot Bulgarian summer, and deliberately kept waiting for the approach of the Russian winter with its icy terrors, of which the French army at least might certainly have had a traditional memory and wholesome fear.

Cholera had cut our men off by thousands, and their graves lay thickly all over the slopes in the Vale of Aladyn, where the Russians had buried more than seven thousand of its victims a short time before ; hence it was not inaptly termed by the Bulgarian peasantry the Valley of the Plague.

The 7th, the Welsh Fusileers, the Connaught Rangers, and all the other Infantry had suffered severely, the Highlanders perhaps excepted ; the peculiarity of the Celtic costume, by the warmth it affords round the loins, having proved an admirable protection, which saved many a life in their ranks. Two of our cavalry regiments were reduced to skeletons, and about two hundred and fifty sabres formed the average muster of the other corps. So severe was the pest that many men died and were buried within five hours of their being attacked ; and now stern doubt and luring discontent become visible in the faces of the survivors. "Though no act unbecoming British soldiers was committed—though no breach of discipline could be charged, it was impossible to refrain from discontent. Murmurs, not loud but deep, made themselves heard. No man there but burned to meet the enemy. The entire army was prepared cheerfully to face death in the service of the country to which it had sworn allegiance ; but to remain in inactivity, exposed to pestilence, which struck down its victims as surely and nearly as speedily as the rifle-bullet, beneath a burning sun, with no power of resistance and no possibility of evasion, was a fate which might quell the stoutest courage, and raise discontent in the most loyal bosom."

The French army had come to Varna by marching over the great mountain barrier of Turkey, the Balkan ; our fleet the while had been seeking in vain to lure that of Russia from under the gun batteries of Sebastapol. The Turkish army had been carrying all before it on the left bank of the Danube ; and at Citate and Oltenitza had actually routed and covered the Russian armies with disgrace : but the last days of August still saw our army lingering hopelessly in Bulgaria, while the Russian forces whom they were ultimately to oppose were gathering fast in the land of the Tartars.

Horace shared the cool bell-tent of Cyril in the camp, and on the forenoon of his arrival, while lying on the pleasant sward which formed its floor, enjoying cigars and bitter beer, with belts off and coats open, and when looking forth on the scenery, who

could imagine that death was hovering so near, and that more than ten thousand graves lay around them in that smiling valley!

On one side of the camp lay a beautiful lake, and on the other the ground rose high and was covered with varied foliage, over which the storks were always flying in long lines. And there too were eagles, vultures, and kites, soaring in mid-air, on the outlook for dead horses, or, it might be, a camp follower who had perished in a lonely place, and lay blackening in the desolate glare of the sun, covered with flies, with dim glazed orbs and open jaws.

Near Cyril's tent were the ruins of a kiosk or country-house which the Russians had destroyed; but its arabesque white marble fountain still remained in the centre of a beautiful garden, where the great Persian rose-trees yet loaded the air with fragrance; where the foliage of the greengage, the apricot, the apple, and the purple plum, waved pleasantly in the soft wind; and the beautiful orioles, all yellow and green, the gaudy woodpecker, the blackbird, and the thrush, darted after the flies at times in veritable coveys, and sung sweetly in the shadow.

A group of soldiers in fatigue dress, filling their camp-kettles, canteens, and horse-buckets, or washing their linen, might always be seen about this fountain. These visitors had long since "looted" the garden of its golden-coloured melons and great scarlet pumpkins; the Egyptian palm, the Indian fig-tree, the gorgeous aloe, and the solemn towering cypress, still grew side by side, though the billhook of the forager had abstracted many a branch to feed the camp-fires, and had the French been near, not a twig had been left.

Now the allied forces, some eighty thousand strong, were under canvas over the whole vast plain which extends from Aladyn to Varna. Horace found Cyril looking pale and changed, for he had undergone a touch of the pest, and he was bearded to an extent that would have astonished the folks at home, whom he had never informed of his illness, as Dr. Riversdale of the staff had "pulled him through it."

"If we don't take the field soon," said he, "the Russians will find but few to fight with. The army, though recruited fast, is rotting away, Horace, literally, and just as our army rotted at Walcheren in 1809, when thirty-five thousand entries were made in the fever hospitals; so you see that in forty-seven years Britain has learned nothing in the art of war! But how fresh you fellows look just from home, in your new uniforms and bright epaulettes, as if you had just stepped from band-boxes. By Jove! you do form a contrast to those who have been under canvas here so long."

Cyril had, of course, overwhelmed Horace with questions about all who were at home; and the latter had related, in

confidence, the affair with Chesters in the transport. It, however, excited no surprise, as Cyril knew the worthy's character well; but the mention he had made of Mary Lennox's name stung, grieved, and bewildered him. In prison! The story seemed mere malevolence, and altogether incredible! How could it come to pass?

While they were speaking the same Drum-Major who had been wont to act as regimental postman at Chatham—ay, even in Candahar and many other places—appeared at the tent-door, coolly as usual, with letters for both, the mails having come on in the *Blenheim* from Malta. Each tore his missive open in haste, and became absorbed in its contents; for a letter there was as a voice from home, and the hearts of both were instantly far away from the tented vale of Aladyn, among the green braes of the Merse and Lauderdale. Cyril's was from his mother, to whom he was tenderly attached. That to Horace was from Gwenny.

"For a reason, of which I may tell you at a future time," Lady Wedderburn mentioned among other matters, "we have employed Chesters' old gatekeeper, Tony Heron, in the stable-yard, where, by-the-by, the long projected new wing and clock-tower are progressing. Robert is busy with his studies, and will come out for the English Temple. Your father thinks that as he is not brilliant he might shine amid the aspiring mediocrity of the Scottish bar (where there is such utter poverty of position and of talent); but in London, we fear, that he will never *beheard of at all!* The Reverend Gideon M'Guffog, not content with 'the flesh pots' he enjoys, is raising an action, chiefly against us, for an augmentation of his stipend, through Grubb and Wylie, the writers (or wretches rather), who, like too many Scotch legal desperadoes, are ready to do anything for cash or a case. As your regiment does not wear the kilt, Dr. Squills urges that you should wear a belt as a safe precaution against that cholera which seems so terrible at Varna; and Gervase Asloane says he has in the cellar some fine old Glenlivat, which would be a better protection still, had we but the means of sending it to you."

Other things followed, of as little importance as these, but there came one remark which found an echo in Cyril's heart.

"That foolish old man at Lonewoodlee is no more, as Horace, perhaps, by this time may have told you, and his proud, but penniless, daughter has left this part of the country for ever."

Mary's face, her sad, earnest eyes, her last words, and her helplessness, all came painfully before him. Dead—old Oliver Lennox dead! Cyril in imagination saw all the grim details of the last scene, with poor Mary alone—so terribly alone—in

that old rambling and gloomy Tower. Had his mother been—as he implored her to be—kind to that orphan girl whom he had loved even as his own soul? The coldness of her letter gave him slender hope of that. Who, then, had befriended, who aided her? Chesters? He writhed at this thought, and though he had never ceased to love her, but false as he deemed her, had sworn never to see her more, the interest he felt in Mary's fate would never die.

The cousins tacitly, and with one accord, exchanged letters, and Cyril, from the tenor of Gwenny's, guessed at once how matters stood now, and said—"Bravo, Master Horace! So you have not been idle in my absence? But I congratulate you, old fellow, for Gwenny, wealth apart, is a girl among ten thousand!"

Horace blushed with pleasure, and replied, with a laugh—

"For Heaven's sake, Cyril, don't tell Lady Wedderburn that we have committed the enormity of falling in love. You know what her *wish* is, so far as you are concerned?"

But Cyril did not answer, for another pang was inflicted on him by a passage in Gwenny's letter to Horace, and it almost seemed to corroborate the remark of Chesters in the troop-ship.

"There has been some talk among us from time to time of a trip eastward in the Ernescleugh yacht, so don't be surprised if we should see the Russians before you do. I should like to get a Turkish husband for Zillah, my ayah (the men here won't look at her), and I don't think that Miss Flora M'Caw, at her mature years, would have much objection to a Muscovite, even if his name were like three sneezes with *off* or *iski* at the end of them. The orphan girl, Miss Lennox—perhaps you may remember, dearest Horace, it was she of whom such unpleasant things were said by the Ernescleughs—was visited by Aunt Wedderburn and me after her father's death, and before she went to London. Aunt gave her a most kind letter to the Wetheralls in Piccadilly, and another was sent to her address somewhere near the Strand; but it was returned by the post-office people, with the information that she could not be found in London—had disappeared, in fact."

Disappeared, and in London!

Cyril grew ghastly pale as he read those words, which seemed to burn themselves into his heart, and in a gust of jealous bitterness, he connected this disappearance still with Chesters. He started up, shouted for his servant, and ordering horses, added, suddenly and impatiently—"You have reported yourself to Sir Edward, the Colonel?"

"Of course, Cyril."

"Well, come, Horace, there is no parade this evening; all hands are turned to pound green coffee. Let us ride into Varna and have some tiffin, such as it is, at the Military Café. Any-

thing to kill time and thought, till we can kill the Russians ! Ned Elton, Probyn, and ever so many more of our fellows will be there by this time, for it is the only place in this dreary hole where any fun is going."

Horace agreed, and a few minutes after saw them mounted and off.

CHAPTER L.

VARNA.

"AND so you and Gwenny are engaged ? By Jove ! Don't wonder at it ! She is a most attractive girl ; and there are worse-looking fellows in the service than you, Horace. But I've not been lucky myself lately in this game of love-making. And you should hear old Conyers Singleton of ours tell the story of the girl he left behind him. It is quite a warning," said Cyril, as they trotted towards the line of advanced sentinels posted round the British camp.

"Going to Varna ?" asked Captain Joyce, of the Fusileers, whose guard tent was in that quarter.

"Yes. What is the parole ?"

"'Bomarsund.' Countersign, 'Baltic.'"

"Thanks. That Zouave heard you ?"

"Perhaps ; but it can't matter much. He is a Captain, I presume ?"

Had Horace not been full of Gwenny's letter, and had he not found ample occupation in repeating to himself certain pleasant passages thereof, he must have been aware that there was a forced or spasmodic gaiety in the manner of Cyril Wedderburn that was not real, for he tugged at his moustache nervously, and viciously switched at the flies which buzzed about his horse's ears.

Troops of every kind ; Lancers, with gay bannerets ; Hussars, with their glittering dolmans ; Carbineers, with brass helmets and slung carbines ; Artillery, in dark blue ; and Infantry, in red, covered all the plain. Our Household Brigade of Guards, in their bright scarlet coats, with large white epanettes and bearskins ; the Highlanders, who were in the same division, in their varied tartans, with their sturdy bare legs and tall-plumed bonnets, exciting the wonder of the starved-looking little Arabs of the Egyptian Contingent. There, too, were the Rifles, in their sombre green uniform, which looks almost black at a distance.

All the bustle of preparing food went forward at hundreds of impromptu fires, by soldiers in their shirt-sleeves ; and the sound of chopping wood was heard on every hand, while the sun of the afternoon blazed hot in their fires from the unclouded Bulgarian sky. Fatigue parties went to and fro, laden with bundles

of sticks for the cooks, or corn or swathes of grass for the horses; and songs and merriment came at times from the tents where the soldiers lay smoking on the sward. But the camp had its darker pictures.

Here and there a ghastly and attenuated sick man might be seen carried on a stretcher to the hospital tents; and, ere long, the same stretcher would be borne in another direction, with some victim of the Fever King, to be cast into the graves which honeycombed the low range of hills that overlook the Vale of Aladyn, or it might be to yonder "City of the Dead," in the plain, where the solemn rows of giant cypresses stand like guardians round the tombs of "the Faithful."

Beyond the British lay the French camp, with all its gaily-clad, untidy, but somewhat purpose-looking little soldiery. The Infantry of the Line, in long blue tunics, with scarlet epaulettes, and brass eagles on their tiny shakos; the splendid Cavalry and Artillery of the Imperial Guard; the Chasseurs à Pied; the Tirailleurs Algériens, dressed like Arabs, but in light blue; and the active Zouaves, in their (to us) well-known uniform, which excited great surprise and speculation among the stolid Turks and the Bulgarians who swarmed about the camps in great numbers, clad in jackets of undyed wool, wide white trousers, girt with sashes of silk, caps of brown sheep-skin, and sandals of hide; and who failed to comprehend how Christians should be going to battle wearing the turban of Mohammed; for the poor Bulgarians loathe the Turks, whose slaves they are; and as such, dare not carry a knife, while all the former, down to the lowest *hamal* (or porter) go armed to the teeth, with pistols, sabre, and yataghan.

Amid all its splendour and order of military array, this camp, like our own, had also its dark features; the sick and dead were hourly borne through it; and there too were the intoxicated, courting disease and death, as they lay by the waysides, in ditches or kennels, stupefied with raki or peach-brandy, their faces blistering in the sunshine, and covered by clouds of odious flies. Others, despite all warnings, might be seen gorging themselves with scarlet pumpkins, cucumbers, gages and plums which the acquisitive Greeks offered for sale; and the Turks of Omar Pasha were nearly as reckless, for they were always eating of the perilous green fruit, when not engaged in smoking, praying, or covertly reviling "the Christian dogs," who had to fight their battles.

As Wedderburn and Horace were passing a mass of Araba carts, all drawn up wheel to wheel, there darted from under them a long snake of dark green colour mottled with white, and having bright protuberant eyes that flashed like carbuncles. As the reptile came forward, writhing, wriggling, and almost

dancing on its tail, Cyril's horse reared back upon its haunches; but a Turkish *Yazboshi*, or captain of cavalry, who was riding by, drew a long brass pistol from his belt, and with singular adroitness shot it dead; and with a pleasant smile and a low salaam rode on. Once or twice the reptile quivered all its length in the dust, and then lay still.

"Ma foi, mes camarades, but that was well done!" said a voice, and they found themselves joined by the same Captain of Zouaves whom they had seen near Joyce's guard-tent. He was now mounted on a stout little Tartar horse and seemed to have made a *détour* round the French lines, instead of coming *through* them. The cousins scarcely noted the circumstance then, but subsequent events made them remember it. "Going into Varna, Messieurs?" he asked, reining in beside them.

"Yes," replied Cyril.

"A horrid place—dull as a vast catacomb; even the French can scarcely make it lively. Any word yet of when the troops are like to take the field, or for what point?"

"I have heard nothing yet, Monsieur," said Cyril, with some reserve, as the manner of the questioner seemed abrupt and authoritative.

"Your cavalry force is dwindling fast," resumed the Zouave. "Why, diable! all your regiments put together would barely make *one* efficient Russian corps of four squadrons," he added, with a mocking laugh.

"I don't understand this Captain of Zouaves," said Cyril, in a low voice: "he spends his whole time in our camp, and seems to have fallen in love with perfidious Albion. What can his object be?"

"Are you sure that he *is* a Captain of Zouaves?" said Horace.

"I have no reason to doubt it—but hush; he may understand English."

It might have been some peculiarity of his dress which made Horace think what he said, for the Zouave had features that were more finely cut than usually appertain to Frenchmen. His eyes were black, glittering, and closely set together; his nose was somewhat hooked and a fierce moustache stuck sharply out on each side of it; but his hair, which was dark as a raven's wing, was shorn close to the scalp.

"Sang, Dieu!" he exclaimed, as if he had penetrated their thoughts and doubts, "but I am tired of this work. Ugh! when we pound the green beans here, between two friable stones, which add dust in plenty to the condiment, I think of the fragrant coffee I used to get at home, and the little pats of sweet butter on a honey-cake, or on a cool green ivy-leaf—the breakfast of my schoolboy days, at home in pleasant Gascony. I have been a soldier for twenty years; but I have never forgotten those days."

"He is a Gascon—ah, that accounts for his peculiar accent," said Horace.

"I am not much of a gourmand," resumed the Captain of Zouaves. "In Africa, I have often dined on a slice from an old trooper—a horse I mean; but still I have a predilection for *fricassées*, and *fricandeaux et galettes*, which mean *collops Ecossais*, or thin cakes (though the Scotch stole all their cooking from us, in the days of the old alliance), and I doat on broiled chicken and cream-tarts, such as I used to get from my old mother in Gascony, before I betook me to the rough-and-ready trade of soldiering."

"And now, Horace," said Cyril, whom the Frenchman's empty chatter bored, "behold our thriving city of Varna!"

It was a dreary looking place, and rose from a bank of white sand that stretched far along the flat Bulgarian shore.

Imagine a low and half-ruined wall, a mile in length, broken and battered as the shot of the Scoto-Russian Alexis Greig had left it in 1828, but all loopholed and painted pure white. Before it lies a ditch, over which a number of 68-pounder guns are pointed. Above it rise the round leaden domes of four mosques, with their tall, white, slender minarets, encircled by wooden galleries; the solitary campanile of the Greek church, and round these a little sea of dingy red-tiled roofs, and one may picture that Varna on which so many of our soldiers looked their last, and before which Ladislaus of Lithuania and Poland perished in a futile attempt to drive the stupid and brutal Osmanlees out of Christendom.

Prior to the arrival of our troops, its filthy streets had been deserted and silent as the grave. Save when a wild dog—the unclean and forbidden animal of the Prophet—panting with out-lolled tongue on a heap of decayed melons or festering offal, uttered a melancholy howl; when a stork, with flapping wings, came swooping down on the eaves of a dilapidated house, and loosened a tile or two, to fall with a crash; or when a bare-legged *saka* (a water carrier), with his brown feet in low slippers, and his greasy buckets slung from a shoulder-strap, shambléd along the narrow and tortuous, yet sunbaked, thoroughfares, no sound was ever heard there.

But now French and British soldiers filled every street and alley with noise and bustle; the bazaars were crowded by Zouaves chattering like magpies; by Rifles and Guardsmen; by grave and observant Scottish Highlanders in search of food, *soochook* sausages, and kabobs, or little articles of finery for wives and sweethearts far away at home; by quarter-masters and sutlers, seeking corn and flour, beef and mutton, Greek wine and peach-brandy; in short, everything eatable and drinkable. Drums were beaten, bugles sounded incessantly, and incessant

too was the marching to and fro of guards, escorts, pickets, and fatigue parties in their canvas frocks. Tumbrils, limbers, cannon and tents, encumbered the five arched gates; war-ships, transports, and pestilent looking little gunboats, crowded all its once empty harbour. The black kites and mangy pariah dogs were alike scared from its streets and market place. The lazy and blasé Turkish householder secluded himself in his *divan haneé*, or *zenanah* if he had one; and hourly held up his hands, or stuck his fingers in his ears, at every fresh wonder, for to him it seemed that the end of the world was nigh, for the sons of Anak, the children of Perdition and the Devil himself, had all possessed the city together!

French names were actually painted up at the street corners, and to crown all, an old deserted caravansera had been taken possession of, *sans permission*, by a speculative Parisian *restaurateur*, who papered, painted, and furbished it up gaily, and hung out an immense sign-board, on which an artistic Corporal of Zouaves had painted the French eagle, with the words, "*Le Restaurant de l'Armée d'Orient, pour Messieurs les Officiers et Sous-Officiers*;" and under this sign-board Wedderburn and Horace Ramornie dismounted, gave their nags, with a few piastres, to two half-naked *hamals* to lead about, and then entered the café.

CHAPTER LI.

LE RESTAURANT DE L'ARMÉE D'ORIENT.

"WE are going to have cigars and a bottle of Greek wine," said Cyril to the Zouave Captain, who seemed at first doubtful about entering, and then acceded with a bow. Cyril thought that perhaps he was a man of high French family and did not care much to mix with the *sous-officiers*, many of whom were then mingling with their superiors, playing chess or dominoes, laughing, smoking, chatting gaily, or perusing the *Charivari*; even *Punch* and the *Illustrated News*, which were not wanting for the amusement of the British officers, many of whom were in the large and strange looking coffee room, which had been the place where the horses and camels had been stabled when the house was a khan of high repute. On many parts of the walls were coloured prints of Parisian girls, opera and ballet dancers, pirouetting in the shortest of drapery, and round them the Turks were wont to gather in amazement, and to mutter that such beauties were worthy of the Padishah himself.

Everything that he saw filled Horace, like every new comer

with wonder, or excited his interest ; strange dresses, manners, voices and faces ; but Cyril had already become intimate with all these as if he had known them from boyhood.

He who arrives in any place which is to be his quarters for a time, feels as if the strange streets, the public edifices, the churches, and the sound of their bells, would never become familiar ; yet Horace was so much of a soldier that he had not been three days in and about Varna before the aspect of the itinerant Dervises, who received his piastres or paras with a malediction ; the shrill invitation of the Muezzin from the minaret ; the Turk kneeling at prayer on a bit of tattered carpet in the open street, counting his *colomboio*, and scowling with horror at the passing Highlander ; the French *vivandière* riding at the head of a battalion of Chasseurs à Cheval, and waggishly kissing her hand to some fat old Pasha ; the women stealing along like sheeted spectres in their white yashmacs and yellow boots ; the jolly gangs of British tars, trundling up their Lancaster guns from the beach like toys, became all familiar, for the sense of novelty was gone. They had scarcely entered before several of their brother-officers came forward from amid the various tables and groups to accost them, for the cousins were decidedly popular among the Fusileers. There were Bingham, Jack Probyn, old Conyers Singleton the Major, and Pat Beamish, with his black whiskers more bushy than ever.

"Welcome to Varna, Horace, though bad luck to it for a hole, anyhow !" said Beamish ; "for if we don't get out of it sharp, between raki and unripe fruit, we'll leave half our men behind us."

"Orders and advice go for nothing, so far as these are concerned," added the Major.

"Bedad, the arms of Briareus and the eyes of Argus won't keep these Greek devils with their fruit out of the camp ; and there's Bingham of ours narrowly escaped a slash from a yataghan for peeping through the holes of a woman's yashmac in a sherbet shop yesterday, and giving her a chuck under the chin."

"Is that Home of the Guards with a cocked hat ?" asked Horace, as he saw the Master of Ernescleugh seated jauntily on a table, laughing with some French and Turkish officers.

"Yes ; he's on the staff."

"An aide-de-camp ?"

"Yes, and enjoys the fullest confidence of the General," said Beamish ; "but here, unfortunately, he cannot have that which is so indispensable to the position of an aide-de-camp—the confidence of the General's wife and daughters."

Colonel De la Fosse, who was seated at a table with a few officers of the French 34th, now rose and lifted his cap to Horace, who said, "Allow me, Colonel, to introduce my brother

officer, Captain Wedderburn. It was De la Fosse," he added to Cyril, "who in some measure revenged you on Chesters; but, by the way, in the troop-ship we agreed not to refer to that subject."

"Ah, now, comrade, it was to your kind father I believe that I owe the favour of being what I now am," said the Colonel, as he warmly shook Cyril's hand; "for his opportune assistance saved me, when yonder brigand put me in a sore strait indeed!"

Wine and cigars were speedily brought, and the new arrivals proceeded through their medium to enjoy the buzz and heedless merriment around them. The restaurant was soon densely crowded, and the mixture of languages, French, English, Turkish, Greek, and often a polyglot of them all, and bad Bulgarian, were heard on all sides. The only silent person was the observant captain of Zouaves who accompanied Cyril and Horace, and who, oddly enough, seemed far from being at ease.

"Drink with us, Monsieur," said Colonel De la Fosse. "You are very silent for a Zouave; your fellows have the reputation of being more noisy than even the Tourlourous," he added, laughing, as he used the sobriquet for the French Linesmen.

"I am thinking of Paris," replied the Captain. "But we must rough it as best we may, for potages and jellies, ragoûts, and pâtés are all unknown here."

"But you can have kidneys fried in champagne," said Beamish; "or claret mulled with a dash of clove or a slice of pineapple, and sure these are luxuries enough for any man on service."

"Yes; but here one longs for the cafés chantants, the theatres, the casinos, and the girls of Paris, with their sparkling black eyes and white shoulders."

"*Ah, ces épaules blanches?*" said a sous-lieutenant, throwing up his eyes. "True; for the women here look hideous in their shapeless muffings."

"Your regiment, mon Capitaine, is the——" De la Fosse paused and twirled his moustache.

"The 1st Zouaves, mon Colonel," replied the other, curtly.

"Ah, encamped at present a mile or two beyond the Devna Lake."

"Exactly, Monsieur," replied the Zouave Captain, who seemed to dislike the expression of scrutiny he read in the keen eyes of the Colonel, who wore the square peak of his scarlet kepi close to his nose.

"It was your regiment that led the van at the pass of Djerma?"

"Yes, Monsieur," replied the Zouave, while the Colonel tugged at his moustache more than ever.

"I too am sick of Varna," said a gay-looking Chasseur à Cheval, "and long, if not for active service, for the pleasures

of Paris ; a ramble in the Place de la Concorde, or the Gardens of the Tuileries, or to take my ease in the Hôtel de Lausanne, instead of the devilish old tumble-down Restaurant de l'Armée d'Orient."

"Yes ; and perhaps to run after the nurse and grisettes," said the Zouave Captain.

"Tra la la la, l'amour est là !" sang the Chasseur. "Well, perhaps, yes."

"But," said Cyril, "there are no grisettes such as we find in the romances of Paul de Koch and his predecessor, the author of the 'Conquests of Mademoiselle Zina' (over which the Emperor slept on the retreat from Leipzig)—the grisette is now a *petite dame*."

"Any way you take it," replied the Zouave, with a growing irritation of manner. "We have but a dreary time of it here, nursing the sick and burying the dead ; no fighting, no glory ; patience—always patience. *Mal peste !* what we have endured since our troops came down the passes of the Balkan !"

"Your reward is at hand, Monsieur," said De la Fosse. "In four days we leave this to attack the enemy !"

A burst of applause followed this announcement, and hearty English cheers, mingled with shrill yells of "*Vive la France !*" "*Vive l'Empereur !*" the old cry that rang over Waterloo, and many a field of the past !

"In what direction is the attack ?" asked the Zouave, eagerly.

"I am not yet at liberty to say."

"But your authority is undoubted, Monsieur ?"

"I had it from Marshal St. Arnaud himself."

"I am glad to hear of it," added the Zouave. "Gunpowder is the incense amid which the souls of the brave go straight to God."

"Somehow, that bit of bombast is the only thing this fellow has said like a true Frenchman," whispered Cyril to Horace.

"In four days," exclaimed the young chasseur. "*Ouf, ma foi !* we'll eat the Muscovites up—train oil, tallow, and all the rest of it !"

"And now, Messieurs, adieu," said the Zouave, as he drained his wineglass, put his sword under his arm, and with a low bow quitted the café. The keen glance of De la Fosse followed him, and then fell on Cyril Wedderburn. Each read doubt in the other's eye.

"Is that Captain of Zouaves much about the camp ?" he asked.

"Daily ; but he keeps more among the British than the Turks."

"I am sorry to hear this."

"Why, Monsieur ?" asked Cyril.

"Because it adds to my suspicions," said De la Fosse, lowering his voice. "He showed a purse with more gold in it than usually falls to the lot of a captain of Zouaves; and he spoke of the First leading the van at Djerma, when it was I who led the van there, at the head of the 3rd Zouaves, and 3rd Chassens à Pied."

"Do you mean to say that you think——"

"I know not what to think; but fear to be rash. To detain him might excite a bad feeling between the Zouaves and ours, if he be innocent; but anyway, I shall ride to Devna to-morrow and see his regiment on parade."

"You had not many scruples about unmasking our Major of the Turkish Contingent," said Horace, laughing.

"Ah! but then I knew him of old," replied the Colonel; "and I detected his false play while watching, with regret, a signet ring he wore; an onyx graven with my crest, a gauntlet on the point of a sword, with the motto, *Droit en avant*—a ring that had been long in my family, and which we valued highly, because there is a terrible story attached to it. He won it from me, however, at play, when I madly staked and was stripped of everything."

"And what is this story, if I may inquire?" asked Wedderburn.

"It belongs to the old days when duelling was alike a passion and a vice with the French, who carried it almost to a pitch of insanity; and if it while a little of this time, which we find so irksome in Varna, I care not if I relate to you the affair, as illustrative of the days of our grandfathers—in France at least."

"*Bon! très bon!* Agreed! Very good! Fire away! Colonel," said several voices in French and English; and after more wine and cigars had been brought, the Colonel related the following story.

CHAPTER LII.

THE DUEL A MORT.

"LOUIS XV. of France died in 1765. It was in the year preceding that event that my grand-uncle, Louis De la Fosse, whose ring that man Chesters now wears, fought the famous duel I am about to relate to you; but prior to doing this, I must go a little way back into the history of himself, and that of the time, now some ninety years ago.

"My family is of Languedoc, and for several generations we have resided near Montpellier; thus it chanced that when my great-uncle Louis was a student attending the Royal College there, he became acquainted with a youth named Renée de

Taillevant De l'Isle, from Provence, and a friendship sprung up between them. The circumstance of Louis' only sister Henriette, a beautiful blonde, being not indisposed to view the handsome Renée—for Renée was so—with favour, conduced greatly to cement this regard ; and at the house of Louis most of the spare time of Renée was spent, when studies were over.

"Both lads were destined for the army ; every gentleman of good family in France took a turn of military service then, in some fashion, with the Mousquetaires, the Line, or as a volunteer ; and knowing that the time would come when they should be inexorably separated, their friendship, the spontaneous growth of two generous and affectionate hearts, of similarity of taste and thought, was all the stronger.

"They had gone through the same classes at college ; they practised together the use of the sword, and soon taught each other to excel all their companions in every trick of the science of self-defence. They hunted together in the mountains, boated together on the Rhone, and, accompanied by Henriette, had many a wild gallop among the beautiful groves of olive and mulberry trees, which grow there in much luxuriance, for Languedoc is one of France's most favoured regions ; and on these occasions the fair Henriette, with her golden hair dressed *à la Marquise*, looked like a beauty by Watteau, in her riding-habit of *gris-de-lin*, then the fashionable colour. I have seen her portrait, taken then, and she must have been lovely, though she did wear the stand-up collar—the *collet-monté*—of the time of Louis XIV. to please her mamma, who was somewhat old-fashioned in her tastes, and was full of recollections of the brilliant entertainments she had seen at Marli.

"And Renée de l'Isle idolized her ; but though wealthy and noble—for in those days people made a great fuss about their heraldry ; to marry was to get a coat of arms, quartered, impaled, or so forth ; now we are thankful if we marry a good monogram. So the world wags—*très bon !* Well, though wealthy and noble, he was too young to think of marriage, and so was Henriette. A little time, and they should be happy, for they were betrothed solemnly in the church of Saint Pierre ; but that little time was to be spent by Renée in the army ; and one morning which brought him but a dubious throb of excitement and which filled Henriette's heart with anguish, he found himself appointed a sub-lieutenant in the Regiment of Mazarin (the 54th of the old French Line, under the monarchy), as a letter from the Minister of War, Lieutenant-General the Duc de Choiseul, informed him. So now Damon and Pythias were to be separated. The days of their joy were to terminate.

"The lovers were impulsive and young ; so their hearts were wrung with sorrow at parting. Henriette gave Renée a white

scarf embroidered by her own hands with blue *nonpareille*, a narrow ribbon then much used by ladies in decorating silk or velvet, and weeping as if her heart would break, she placed it round him, and then sank into the arms of her mother.

“‘Oh, Henriette, cease to weep thus. Your life was never made for sorrow,’ murmured Renée, as he hung over her pale face. ‘It should be all love, kisses, and sunshine; and such shall it be, my beloved, when in two years I return.’”

“*Ah, mon Dieu!* two years!’ she exclaimed, and would not be comforted; for two years seemed a long, long time indeed to look forward to.

“While Renée for a time could feel no military ardour, even while contemplating himself by the aid of his mother’s great crystal-framed mirror in the white uniform, the scarlet vest, and gold-bound hat of the Regiment of Mazarin, he strove to comfort himself by remembering that in the scene before him the term of probation would soon glide away.

“But he could think only of Henriette, her tears and her fair beauty, her love and her promises of fidelity, and while posting away to the frontier of Germany, he longed to be again as he had been, a happy boy in the woods of Languedoc, conning over with Henriette the charming story, ‘*La Belle au Bois dormant*,’ and others, before they learned to relish the writings of Scuderi, Mademoiselle de la Fayette, and the Countess d’Auneuil. So they parted, but looked forward to the coming time when they could marry, and be happy for all the days of their lives, as the old stories have it.

“The following month the tears of Henriette flowed afresh, for her only brother, Louis De La Fosse, was appointed to the Regiment of Languedoc, which was the 53rd of the old Line, prior to the Revolution of 1792; but though the numbers of their respective corps were so *near*, the friends were placed far apart; for while Renée was doing duty on the banks of the Rhine, Louis was sent to broil in Martinique for two years.

“In all that time he never heard of Renée, and but seldom of his own family. In those days there were no steamers, no telegraphic wires or deep sea cables; and the letters of those who were separated became indeed as the visits of angels, few and far between.

“However, the famous treaty of Paris, by which France lost Canada and Louisiana, enabled her to bring home great numbers of her troops from far and foreign shores; thus the year 1764 saw the Regiment of Languedoc quartered in its native province; and as it marched into Montpellier to take quarters in the strong citadel which Louis XIV. had built, how great was the joy of Louis De la Fosse to find the Regiment of Mazarin drawn up to receive and salute it with all the honours

of war, bayonets fixed and colours flying ; for by a singular coincidence, the 54th had come in but a few days before from the Rhine.

"Mademoiselle De la Fosse had been taken to Paris by her parents, as her health had been delicate ; but the two young lieutenants speedily met and renewed their friendship amid the same scenes where it had first grown and been cemented, and for some days they were incessantly together before they remembered that they now unfortunately belonged to two regiments which had long been rivals in camp, field, and garrison ; and following up some absurd feud, old, perhaps, as the latter days of the Cardinal, from whom the 54th was named, had fostered an unremitting hatred, which was apt to break out between the officers and men of each on the most trivial occasions. Such feuds were but too common then in the French service, and officers of hostile corps would fight, whenever they met, upon the least imaginary affront, even a glance, though when out of uniform they were the best friends in the world.

"The 53rd had been raised in Languedoc in 1672, and the Comte de Douglas was its Colonel at the time of our story. The 54th had been raised the year after, and was commanded by the Marshal Duc de Mazarin.*

"The friends knew of this spirit of folly, but it was nothing to them ; they would soon be brothers, they loved each other dearly, and would never do otherwise. One evening they had dined together at the *Fleur d'Amour*, a cabaret in the Place du Peyron, a promenade outside the city, and as they sat at the open windows, which from the lofty terrace enabled them to survey all the old familiar views, their hearts swelled with happiness, and they grasped each other's hands.

"*"Peste !"* exclaimed Renée, 'but this is pleasanter work than lying on out picket before Frankfurt !'

"*"True, Renée, mon ami,"* responded Louis. 'When looking down as we do on dear old Montpellier, with all its quaint, old-fashioned streets, and the groves and vineyards of our beautiful Languedoc, spreading yonder far away even to the Pyrenees, the blue Mediterranean in the distance, dotted with white sails, it seems as if it were but yesterday that we trudged together to college, with Livy, Horace, Juvenal, and Euclid in our satchels, and yet thousands of miles of ocean have rolled between us since then, and I have been among the Caribbean Isles, have seen the green savannahs of Martinique, and the lightning of a tropical tempest play round the summit of Mont Pelee !'

"*"Morbleu !"* but yesterday indeed, and yet an age since we saw Henriette—our Henriette, Louis !'

"Let us be happy in the hope of seeing her soon ; and

* "*Liste Historique des Troupes de France."*

meantime, let us have a little turn at piquet, for here comes Gustave Lapierre of ours, a horrid quarrelsome fellow, with whom we had better have nothing to do.'

"So they seated themselves at piquet just as Lapierre, a tall, thin, and swaggering looking officer, with his triangular cocked hat very much over one eye, his left hand planted on the hilt of his sword, the fingers of his right twirling his moustache, entered the room, bowed to De la Fosse, gave a supercilious glance at the face of Renée and the uniform of the 54th, and with a loud and imperious voice, ordered wine and the 'Gazette Française.'

"Renée felt his face flush, but he affected to attend to his game, and he and his friend played for small sums, as neither of them ever gambled; but Renée being annoyed by the presence and general bearing of Lapierre, played ill, and the run of the cards went in favour of Louis, who won every game.

"'Pardonnez moi, Louis,' said Renée, laughing; 'but how is it possible that you always win so?'

"'In what way?'

"'Contriving *always* to have such excellent hands.'

"'No contrivance at all, my dear Renée; 'tis chance; but keep your temper.'

"'Could I lose it with you, Louis, when your voice and eyes so remind me of Henriette?'

"'Well, cease to think so much of her, and the next game perhaps may be in your favour,' said Louis, laughing.

"'Hélas non!' sighed Renée, and again Louis laughed, for he won, and then they separated with an arrangement to meet on the morrow. De l'Isle repaired to his quarters in the citadel, while De la Fosse took his horse and rode off to his father's chateau, which stands on the road to Nismes, and is still a fine old place, though it was sorely battered and burned by the Huguenots in 1622.

"Lapierre had been an attentive listener to all that had passed; the imprudent jest of Renée at losing so often, the jocular hint at unfair play, and Louis's laughing advice that he should 'keep his temper.' Repairing straight to the citadel, he gathered a few of the quarrelsome spirits of the 53rd about him, and to them he retailed the story, but in such a manner that the whole affair took the tone of an affront passed upon the corps, through the regimental antagonism of the 54th, and he was deputed to represent to De la Fosse that he must 'demand immediate satisfaction alike for the sake of his own honour and that of the Regiment of Languedoc.'

"Louis was inexpressibly shocked when he heard how the matter was likely to turn, and felt inclined to pass his sword through the body of the meddlesome regimental bully who so

smilingly confronted him ; but that would not have mended the affair, though it might have benefited society, as Lapierre was a professional duellist, and had killed and wounded many men, by a peculiar feint followed by a thrust, of which he alone was master.

“ ‘Come, come, comrade, you must have him out and kill him, or we shall be obliged to call out every officer of his corps in succession, and give them their *sauce Robert* to perfection.’

“ Louis knew that this was meant by Lapierre as a sneer at the family of Renée, who was descended from Taillevant, Master of the Kitchen to Charles VII. of France, for whom he invented no less than seventeen different sauces ; so the remark, which might have made him laugh at another time, inflamed him with passion at the speaker.

“ ‘Beware, Gustave Lapierre,’ said he, ‘for if I am taunted to fight my dearest friend—which cannot be thought of—I shall fight with *you* next.’

“ ‘Perhaps that cannot be thought of *either*,’ sneered the other, with a contemptuous glance of his grey-green eyes, which were totally destitute of lashes ; ‘but as you please ; I shall lay before the corps your doubts and scruples in this matter, and we shall solve them for you, *après la mode Française*.’

“ ‘Dare you, Monsieur, impugn my courage ?’

“ ‘It seems I must ; but the omission of that in your composition is a little oversight on the part of Providence for which you are in no way to blame,’ sneered the other.

“ ‘Sangdieu, but I will kill you, Lapierre !’

“ ‘You may try ; but you must first kill this Renée Taillevant De l’Isle.’

“ Knowing but too well where all this tended, and aware of the fashion of the time, Louis at once sought out his friend, in a state of mind most difficult to describe.

“ Duelling, I have said, was then alike a passion and a vice in French society ; so it was carried to a pitch of ferocious madness in the army. Louis XV., and the two Louises his predecessors, had issued many an edict in vain against it, but the rage for fighting, wounding, and killing by the sword continued, though not quite so bad as in the time of Henry IV., during whose reign, as Lomenie records, no less than four thousand French gentlemen perished in single combat ; and by the civil law of France, as it existed in 1764, the period referred to, ‘the body of a person slain in a duel was ordained to be dragged through the streets on a sledge, and refused Christian burial ;’ but there were ways and means for evading this ordinance, as we shall see in the end.

“ With sorrow and horror in their hearts, and with tears in their eyes, they found themselves compelled to take their swords

and repair to a solitary part of the old rampart that girds Montpellier, and there, in presence of Gustave Lapierre and several officers of both regiments, they threw off their white uniforms, and engaged in their shirt sleeves, each as he did so seeking only to be wounded, rather than to wound, and to avoid meeting the glance of the other.

"Guard, Louis—oh, mon Dieu—guard!" exclaimed De l'Isle.

"Guard you, Renée; cover yourself well," replied De la Fosse.

"Enough of compliments—enough of griefs," said Lapierre, scornfully; "fall on, like French gentlemen!"

"Would it were with thee!" exclaimed both together.

"I am at your service, Messieurs, this affair once over."

In the peculiar manner they fought, they each received a sufficient number of flesh wounds with the sword's point to have satisfied even the artificial scruples of the spectators, and actually to disable themselves from continuing the conflict longer, for that day at least. So they separated and retired each to his quarters.

The moment that Renée had his wounds dressed he presented himself before the senior officers of his regiment; but they one and all turned their backs upon him, with the taunt that he 'had been forced to fight.'

"In the name of God and St. Denis, what more must we do?" asked Renée, in utter bewilderment.

"Fight till one is killed on the spot, or be for ever disgraced among us as a couple of poltroons!"

"He and you, and all of you who would say so are liars and pitiful *capitaines*!" cried Renée, transported with rage; but their insulting laughter rang in his ears as he quitted the citadel, and again sought the presence of his friend.

In the distraction of their minds, they resolved that they should meet again on the morrow, rush simultaneously upon each other's swords and die together!

Early next morning, Louis De la Fosse was seated in the library of the château, writing a farewell letter to his parents and to Henriette, when the latter suddenly appeared by his side. Accompanied by her old nurse, she had preceded their father and mother, who had loitered in Montpellier; but she had heard that with which the whole city was ringing, that her affianced husband had insulted her brother; that they had fought and were to fight again.

Fear was in her face, but in her eyes were mingling a gleam of anger with the light of love, for she idolized her brother. Her eyes were beautifully set, with a half droop in the lids that gave them great sweetness and softness, though her short upper lip and chiselled nostrils—it is a great word "chiselled," and I

don't know how we should ever get on without it—told of spirit and will and high breeding too.

" 'Oh, Louis! after our separation, what a meeting is this for us all!' she exclaimed piteously.

" 'Then you have heard all, my sister?'

" 'Yes; that you have quarrelled, have fought, and hate each other so that though covered with bloody bandages, you are to fight again. Oh, Louis, my brother! tell me in pity can such things be?'

" 'You have but come in time, sister, to see me before I die; for Renée and I have sworn, hand in hand, not to survive each other.'

" 'Oh, this is a madness!'

" 'It is the crime of others, Henriette.'

" Then he told her how they were situated; how the supposed quarrel and the duel had been forced upon them by the insane suggestion of a barbarous code of honour; and a great horror came over the heart of the girl, for she knew that the matter was irremediable, and she clung to his breast and wept in a paroxysm of grief and despair; till at last the fatal hour approached when he had to tear himself away, and leave her.

" 'Farewell, Henriette, my sister, my sweet pet-bird! It is dreadful indeed to die so soon, and by dear Renée's hand too; but you shall see us again, and pray over us, when all is ended.'

" Alas! though she could not foresee it, even that melancholy office was denied her.

" To be brief, they met again upon the ramparts, when all the officers of both regiments were present, those of each corps eyeing the others with hostility, malevolence and exultation. The morning was cold and grey, not a bit of blue was visible in the sky; the sun, as he rose from the waters of the Mediterranean, was shrouded in dun and sombre coloured haze, and the wind came in fitful gusts and sighed mournfully through the embrasures of the old rampart. The two friends were deadly pale, their eyes were bloodshot, their handsome and usually cheerful faces wore an expression of intense sadness, for each felt himself forced into the commission of a dreadful crime, against which all his nature revolted. They moved with difficulty too, for their limbs were stiffened by the wounds of yesterday.

" The words to 'guard' and 'engage' were given by Lapierre, and with half-closed eyes they rushed upon each other's swords, and both fell at the same instance, each pierced by a dreadful wound.

" A cry of mingled agony and anguish escaped Renée; but from the quivering lips of Louis De la Fosse there came not a sound. He was pierced through the heart!

"While writhing himself forward to embrace his dead friend, Renée, whose wound was perilously near the left lung, was lifted up and borne away by some officers of the 54th to the house of a surgeon, where he was kept in concealment for three months, till his wound was cured so far that he could fly and escape the civil authorities. But to prevent the latter from putting in execution the final disgrace of the law upon the dead body of Louis De la Fosse, the officers of the 53rd threw it into a hole which they had ready dug for the purpose; and round that hideous grave they stood in a ring, with their swords drawn, till the remains were almost utterly consumed by quick-lime, so that the sentence I have quoted elsewhere could not by any possibility be put in force upon them; but prior to their destruction thus, Lapierre drew from his victim's finger the onyx ring to which I have referred. My father wore it for his lifetime and then transmitted it to me.

"Renée De l'Isle fled from Montpellier in the night, and perished of want in Spain; and so ended this most barbarous tragedy!"

* * * * *

"And Mademoiselle De la Fosse; what became of her?" asked Cyril, whom the little love bit of the story interested.

"More like a heroine of romance than of real life, she never married; but on proving her eight quarters of nobility became a *Chanoinesse* in the chapter of Ste. Marie, and lived to be a very old, and, notwithstanding her brilliant beauty in youth, a very ugly woman. Often have I sat upon her knee in my infancy, for I was a great pet of hers, and she loved me most perhaps for bearing the name of Louis. She died so lately as 1818, when Louis XVIII. was king of France."

By the time the story of Colonel De la Fosse was ended, the shrill trumpets of the Zouaves and the brass drums of the French Infantry had been giving warning that the time was at hand when, without reference to rank, all should be in camp or quarters; so the *Restaurant de l'Armée d'Orient* began to empty fast, as each visitor departed to the *place d'armes* or head-quarters of his regiment. As that of De la Fosse (the 34th) lay encamped on the side of Varna nearest to the British lines, Cyril, Horace, and he, rode off together leisurely, just as the soft and very brief twilight began to close over the flat shore, the most unpicturesque city, with its four flat leaden domes, and the sea of white tents that spread over the plain to the westward of it.

"By Jove!" exclaimed Horace, "there is our Captain of Zouaves again!"

"Where?" asked De la Fosse, sharply, as he reined up his horse.

"Coming from among the tents of Omar Pasha's people."

"And he is *not* riding towards the lake of Devna, where the 1st Zouaves are under canvas, but quite in an opposite direction."

"At a devil of a pace too," added Cyril.

"Let us follow him. There is something in all this I don't like," said the French colonel.

Skirting the camp, and riding under the concealment of a long grove of olives, they followed him at a short distance, as they thought unseen; but on clearing the group of trees they could perceive that he had urged his little Tartar horse almost to racing speed, and was riding fast towards the sea.

As the brief twilight passed away, and darkness closed over the flat landscape, they lost all trace, but still rode on in the hope of overtaking, or perhaps meeting him when returning; and after continuing this vague pursuit for some miles, they found themselves on a lonely part of the sea coast some seven or eight miles from Varna, and near the port of Baldjik, where no sound broke the silence but the dash of the waves as they rolled on the shingle.

"Well, Messieurs," said Colonel De la Fosse, "we have had a bootless gallop."

"But see—there is some signal!" exclaimed Cyril.

About a mile from them, in the very direction they had come from, a small blue light was suddenly burned for a second or two, but close to the shore; another light upon the water responded, and then came the half-muffled sound of oars in the rowlocks distinctly over the surface of the sea. Then all became still but the dull clang of their horses' hoofs, as the trio galloped along the sands to where the mysterious lights had shone.

Alone on the shore, with ears drooping, stood the little Tartar horse, minus saddle, bridle, and holsters; a scarlet Zouave turban and blue Zouave jacket lay near; and about two miles at sea, but visible nevertheless, was a large lugger or small schooner—which you will—with all her canvas spread, standing away to the north-east out of the Gulf of Baba, as if heading for that portion of the Black Sea which runs towards the Isthmus of Perecop, in the rear of Sebastopol, before which the British fleet lay.

"Death and the devil!" exclaimed the French colonel, "we have had a spy among us; but the fellow, however daring, overacted his part of Frenchman. Ah, *morbleu*! there will be no need for me to visit the camp of the 1st to-morrow; our friend, 'the Zouave captain,' is in yonder craft, with all the information he has been able to glean up in and about Varna, and a few hours hence will lay it all before Prince Mentschicoff."

They were intensely annoyed to find that he had escaped

them;* but regrets were useless now. Wedderburn and Rarmornie returned to their camp in the Vale of Aladyn, bidding farewell to De la Fosse *en route*; but the information he had given in the restaurant proved to be quite correct; for the 5th of September saw the long lines of tents struck on the plain—the charnel-house—of Varna, the great armament embarked for the Crimea, and the smoke of the steamers alone visible from the ramparts when the sun set on the shores of the Black Sea.

CHAPTER LIII.

THE ALMA.

WE have small space for much detail of the Crimean War, and so shall confine ourselves chiefly to the personal adventures of our *dramatis personæ* there. But it seems strange to think how after the lapse of a very few years the terrors, the tears, the sufferings, and the glory incident to that campaign, are already half forgotten, and the whole seems but as a tale that is told! Yet great were the endurance, steady the discipline, and noble the heroism of those who followed Raglan, our one-armed veteran, to the field: and there were men of all ages in his army, from those white-haired warriors who like himself had seen the night of horrors at Badajoz, and the corpse-strewn plains of Vittoria and Waterloo, down to the fair-cheeked boy-ensigns fresh from school; for when the death-lists of the Crimea appeared, many a name therein was recalled with pride and sorrow in the class-rooms and playgrounds of Eton, Harrow, and Rugby.

Yes, it is indeed all as a tale that is told—the night of our landing at Eupatoria, when without tents or baggage sixty thousand men remained on the bare ground, under torrents of rain, thus adding fearfully to the scourge of cholera next day; the march towards the enemy under a blazing sun; the maddening thirst, that thousands broke their ranks and rushed to quench in the Bulganac; the skirmish there with our advanced guard; the heights of Alma bristling with cannon and bayonets; the death ride of “the Six Hundred” at Balaclava, when

* The episode of a Russian spy at Varna was not without a parallel during the siege. “A captain of Zouaves was observed in the French trenches for the last four or five days. As he was always bothering the men working at their guns, the officer commanding the battery called out, ‘Who is that captain of Zouaves that is interfering with my men, and not attending to his duty.’ The fellow appeared confused, and the men began ‘to smell a rat.’ He jumped over the works, and though fired upon, got safely into Sebastopol.”

cannon blazed in front, on flank, and in *rear* of them ; that dull November morning, when amid the grey mists the rumble of the Russian artillery was heard while Mentschicoff poured his hordes into the valley of Inkerman, and the butchery of our wounded there and in the quarries. Then came the half-frozen trenches and rifle pits, while the iron voice on the grassy slopes of the Mamelon, the lines of the Redan, and the mighty batteries of Sebastopol, was never still ; and though last, not least, the ghastly horrors of the great hospital at Scutari !

On the morning of the 20th September, the allied army was face to face with the Russians, led by Prince Alexander Mentschicoff, and then entrenched on the heights above the Alma, a stream which rises among the western slopes of Crim-Tartary, and falls into the sea twelve miles from Sebastopol.

Cyril Wedderburn had been on active service before in India, but this was to be Horace's first battle ; and such was also the case with most of the young subalterns in the army.

High on the southern bank of the Alma rises a ridge of picturesque rocks, which terminate in a cliff which overhangs the Euxine ; in the ravines of these rocks grew groves of turpentine and other trees, many of which had been felled to form *abattis* to encumber the advance of our troops. The Russian lines were formed along that ridge, two miles in length, and by the aid of field glasses their flat caps, their spiked helmets, glittering bayonets, and grey-coated masses, could be seen as the allied columns came on. Every available point was mounted with cannon, trenches were dug, redoubts and breastworks thrown up, and on the Kourganè Hill, six hundred feet above the Alma, to protect his right, Mentschicoff had constructed an enormous triangular battery, mounted with heavy cannon and 24-pounder howitzers. There too was the great Kazan column with the holy image of St. Sergius, and also, oddly enough, a train of carriages full of ladies from Sebastopol and Bagtche Serai, "the Seraglio of Gardens," waiting to see the defeat of the "Island curs," as they termed the British, whom, strangely enough, they believed to be chiefly seamen.

The morning of the Alma was a lovely one. From the Black Sea, where our steamers—their smoke ascending high into the clear air—were creeping in shore to shell the Russian left there came a soft breeze that played along the slopes, and whirled in wreaths the smoke from the blazing Tartar village of Burlink. The leaves rustled pleasantly in the beautiful groves of olive and turpentine trees, and a peculiar fragrance that filled the air came from the leaves of a little aromatic herb (which grew there wild) when bruised by the feet of the marching column, or the wheels of the field artillery. Many places were covered with

orange-coloured crocuses, growing thick as buttercups, in the fields at home.

"It was now that after forty years of peace the great nations of Europe were once more meeting for battle!"

The enemy was at last in front—those dark grey masses, so often spoken of, written of, and thought of—the hordes of half-savage Russia, and as the Fusileers (under Sir Edward Elton, who was mounted on his black barb Vidette, and looked every inch an English soldier) with the rest of their division halted, the altered demeanour of the officers and men became apparent to themselves. All foolish banter and idle conversation had ceased. There was indeed a cessation of sound—a kind of hush—over all the army, save when the neigh of a horse, or the clatter of a field-gun, woke the echoes of the rocks in front.

No man, unless a fool, goes into action, especially for the first time, in the same mood of mind with which he enters a ball-room, or joins a dinner party. Decent gravity pervaded the entire ranks, and many a heart was doubtless filled with prayer and thoughts of home and loved ones far away. Now and then a brotherly emotion of anxiety for Cyril occurred to Horace Ramornie, and to Cyril for him. Which might survive the day to speak of the other? If both fell, would they be buried together?

"Bother such thoughts!" muttered Horace, as he ventured to light a cigar in rear of his company.

They and others waxed a little more kind in their bearing to those about them; and one or two who had small coolnesses, shook hands or bowed and smiled in passing. Some, like Joyce the married captain, leant thoughtfully on their swords; and he, poor fellow, was thinking, no doubt, of the two little faces he had last seen, side by side and asleep in the dingy room at Chatham barracks on the morning of the march.

Sir Edward sat motionless on his horse, till an aide-de-camp, passing at a quick trot—he was Nolan—the gallant and heroic Nolan—said—

"The General wishes the men to get loose their cartridges. This, Sir Edward, will be a field day for most of us to remember."

Elton repeated the order; and under their bearskin caps a grim kind of smile lit up the faces of the Fusileers, as they opened their pouches and loosened the ammunition from its packing paper.

In losing Mary Lennox, life had—for a time at least—lost much of its charm for Cyril Wedderburn; and somehow on this morning he felt as if danger and death had been for him divested of half their terrors; and he had the longing desire to do that which rarely falls to the lot of those of subaltern rank,

something great and brilliant ; something that would make his family and friends—aye, even the lost Mary—proud of him ; yet with all this wild enthusiasm he seemed perfectly cool and unmoved.

But alas for poor Cyril ! as we shall see in the sequel, he longed and hoped in vain for such distinction as he honestly coveted ! And he looked wistfully at the armed and hostile heights with the thought that it would be hard to die there without leaving his mark upon the world—some footprint “on the sands of Time.”

“Breathless and exhausting work this is, gentlemen,” said Sir Edward Elton, taking off his bearskin to cool his forehead, for the heat was intense, and the troops had been some hours under it.

“It suggests vague desires of iced champagne,” said Jack Probyn.

“Egad, it’s mighty glad I’d be of a glass of pale ale, and a pipeful of birdseye or cavendish,” added Beamish ; “but here comes a Frenchman who has been on some final mission I hope to Lord Raglan.”

“Colonel De la Fosse, by Jove !” exclaimed Horace, as that officer trotted past the British lines. “Good morning, Colonel—are we likely to come to blows soon ?”

“Soon enough, it may be, for the Russians yonder, Monsieur,” replied De la Fosse, pausing. “The moment I rejoin Bosquet the attack will commence. I have been pretty close to those Russian fellows already. They look resolute and determined ; but what of that ? We shall teach them that to win glory or die in the field, is all a soldier need care for.”

“Well,” said old Major Singleton, “I should prefer half-pay with a snug pension myself.”

“Every man to his taste, mon camarade,” replied the Frenchman gaily, as he laughed and galloped off to the right, of which the French had contrived to possess themselves, and an awkward post of honour they might have found it, close by the sheer cliffs which overhung the Euxine, had they been defeated, or had the British left been turned.

After two protracted halts, during one of which the French division of Bosquet coolly cooked their coffee and made a comfortable breakfast ; and after two consultations between Lord Raglan and Marshal St. Arnaud (who had taken the field in almost a dying condition), and after the troops had been irritated by seeing parties of Cossacks scouring the ground in front, while the flash of steel could be seen amid the olive groves and breastworks above the Alma, and at times a Russian standard brandished as if in defiance of the lines that were approaching, now wheeling, now deploying, extending and taking ground to

the right or left—a roar of musketry far away on the right flank announced that the fiery French had begun the attack, and were pouring forward in impetuous masses under a terrible shower of missiles of every kind. These masses were chiefly the fierce and active little Zouaves, flushed with their victories in Africa, and they were seen to swarm up the heights at the point of the bayonet, in their blue jackets and baggy red breeches, till they formed in two lines, and with a truly French yell, rushed on to close with the enemy!

On went our columns to close with them too, opening fire at half-past one. By that time, the cannon shots fell thick and fast among our ranks. Bursting at times in mid air, the shrill whistling shells fell in iron showers among them; others ripped up the earth, scattering stones and splinters on every side. Now a bullet swept past unseen with a deep humming sound; the next might tear a man in two, or hurl him away, doubled up like a muslin scarf; another would bury itself deep in the ranks, making a lane of blood and death, of shrieks and agony.

“The slow ping, ping, *ping* of those Minié rifles—don’t at all like it,” said Probyn.

“Daresay not,” replied Meredyth Pomfret, whose face was flushed with boyish ardour and pride in carrying the Queen’s colours. “But why particularly so?”

“It is such deliberate potting, always suggesting that every bullet takes a human life.”

“Well, it is just what a soldier’s work is,” replied the boy, bravely. “By jingo; let us only get close to them!”

The burning village with its flaming stack-yards formed the centre of the British position.

To the right of it the 41st Welsh and the 49th regiments forded the Alma under a heavy fire from the Minié rifles of the Russians who there lay snugly *perdue* in rear of some vineyard walls, over which the purple grapes were hanging in ripe and heavy clusters! while on the left of Burliuk the whole Light Division under old Sir George Brown (who had first smelt powder at the capture of Copenhagen in 1807) dashed across the stream and proceeded to storm the heights, which were so steep in some places, that in several instances the enemy’s bullets traversed the spinal column, as they were shot sheer down upon the assailants.

Cyril’s regiment was in the same division with the 33rd, the Welsh Fusileers, the 19th, 77th, and 88th, all which pressed on with such fury that they speedily routed the Russian riflemen out of the vineyards, carrying the walls at the point of the bayonet, and pushing on beyond these, a few only pausing at times to snatch a handful of those grapes which proved so de-

licious to men furiously excited, and sorely athirst, after their long march in a hot and breathless morning.

Waving their caps and swords in front, their officers led them on, amid tumultuous cheers.

"Forward, the Fusileers!"

"Forward, Twenty-third!"

"On, on—Nineteenth and Seventy-seventh!"

"Forward, forward! aim under the cross-belts."

Such were the cries from officers and men on all hands, as the scarlet tide pressed upward; but they were mingled with many a shriek and groan, for the Russian shot fell thick as hail, and every moment the dead and wounded were dropping in the ranks. But now began that famous up-hill charge, by which the field was won; the dark Rifles meanwhile taking the hills in flank, as coolly as if at drill on Chatham Lines.

The supports were the Duke of Cambridge's Division of Guards and Highlanders.

Cyril could see before him but a cloud of smoke, amid which, at times half seen, half lost, were the figures of Sir George Brown, on a grey charger, and Sir Edward Elton, on his black one. A shower of lead, heavier than usual, tore through the ranks of the division. Colonel Chesters, of the Twenty-third, and eight of his officers, fell almost at the same moment, and their brave Welshmen were nearly decimated. Sir George Brown fell amid a cloud of dust, and, for a moment, it was supposed that he was killed.

The Royal Fusileers then wavered for a moment, but reformed, shoulder to shoulder, as Sir George sprang to his feet and again led on the whole. The first of Sir Edward's officers who fell was Captain Joyce; a bullet shattered his head and his body rolled down hill. The three next were Bingham, Jack Probyn, and young Pomfret. The first was literally cut in two by a round shot; the second was pierced in the heart by a ball, and bounded into the air ere he fell dead. The third had the standard-pole splintered in his hand by a ball, which penetrated his breast, and he was left behind to die in great agony. Ned Elton snatched the colours from his relaxed hand; but in a minute after he too fell, a leg being smashed by a Minié bullet. Relief after relief were shot under that fatal colour; but still the human tide went rolling upward and onward, cheering wildly as their growing enthusiasm became mingled with a thirst for vengeance, and a longing to grapple with the foe!

A roar as of thunder, was in the air, and a hell of fire seemed in front of them.

Meanwhile, wounded officers and men, in hundreds, were being borne to the rear by bandsmen, on stretchers, or crawling to the river side to quench their thirst—in many instances the

thirst of the dying. Though nine hundred of all ranks fell on the slope of the great redoubt, amid the vineyards and the perilous abattis of trees; and though the colours of the Twenty-third Welsh Fusileers were actually planted on it, and the Russians expelled by the bayonet, the victory was not yet decided.

From a higher range of the hills, there rushed upon our now breathless, blown, and shattered troops, a heavy double column of Russian Infantry—the regiments of Ouglitz and Vladimir; one wearing flat caps, the other with spike-helmets. A great, grey, solid mass, they came on with equal ardour and fury, strong in the belief of the conquest which the Bishop of Moscow had predicted would accompany the image they bore—that of St. Sergius—a hideous idol of carved and painted wood.

It was then that the British ranks began to waver, and even to fall back a little way, leaving in and near the redoubt several wounded, who were mercilessly bayoneted, or brained by the clubbed muskets of the Russians, who, in some instances, hewed off fingers in their eagerness to possess the rings of those they murdered.

By this time, no less than nineteen serjeants of the Thirty-third had perished, chiefly in defence of the regimental colours; and most fatal would the temporary repulse have been, but for the re-advance of that corps, with the Fusileers and the Guards and Highlanders of the Duke's division, when the conflict was renewed in all its fury.

The appearance of the Highlanders, in their strange costume, as their brigade advanced in successive *échelon* of regiments, with their tartans and black plumes waving in the wind, seemed to impart some superstitious terror to the Russians, who almost immediately began to waver.

A close and deadly volley was poured upon them. No sound in particular followed, save the yells of the wounded, while the Highlanders "cast about" to reload; but after their next volley, a strange rattling was heard, as the bullets fell fast among the tin canteens and kettles which the enemy carried outside their knapsacks, for they were all *right-about-face* now. Then a cry—a literal wail of despair—came from them, as they broke their ranks and fled, throwing away muskets, packs, caps, and everything that might impede their speed.

Holy Russia was no longer invincible! "The Angel of Light had departed from her, and the Demon of Death had come!" Three generals, seven hundred prisoners, and about seven hundred and fifty of their wounded, remained in our hands, according to Mr. Kinglake, though other authorities have given them as many, many more.

The Heights of the Alma were won; but three thousand three hundred of the Allies lay killed and wounded on their

green slopes, which were dotted for miles by spots in scarlet, blue, or grey—each *spot* a human corpse, or a man in mortal agony from bayonet or gun-shot wounds!

Among the latter was Cyril Wedderburn!

At the very moment when his splendid, but sorely cut-up regiment, led by Sir Edward Elton, was rushing with the bayonet in pursuit of the foe beyond the Kourganè Hill, he was lying near the river, covered with blood and dust, and presenting a piteous spectacle. On two crossed muskets he had been borne there, to have his maddening thirst quenched and his wounds attended to.

When the troops were recoiling, after the capture of the great redoubt, he had found himself close to Horace Ramornie, who was endeavouring to assist a Russian officer of rank, as the number of his medals and stars evinced, and who was lying, half smothered, under his dying horse, in the chest of which a cannon-shot was imbedded.

They succeeded in dragging him out, and raised him to his feet; but the barbarian—in whom, with the speed of thought, Cyril recognised the spy of Varna, the pretended Captain of Zouaves—drew a revolver from his belt, and, inspired by all the terror of capture, and the hatred of race and religion—for by these emotions his face, a handsome one, was quite distorted—he fired at both his protectors, and retired among his advancing men, escaping several shots that were sent after him by the exasperated Fusileers.

Horace escaped uninjured, but poor Cyril had his left arm wounded by one ball, while another penetrated his left breast. He sank into the arms of his kinsman, who uttered a cry of mingled rage and commiseration, and had him borne to the rear by two of the band; but he could do no more, having to lead his company, of which he was now the only surviving officer.

By this time, the Turks and French were in full pursuit of the enemy, whose last efforts were a few faint struggles, and a disorderly and scattered fire. Hereditary hatred and religious rancour alike inspired the Turks, whose shrill cries of "Allah, Allah Hu!" came at times, upon the wind; for they still boast themselves to be the *Assakiri Mansurei Mohamediyes*—the "Victorious troops of Mohamed," and until the day of Balaclava they had always fought with honour.

CHAPTER LIV.

THE 21ST OF SEPTEMBER.

It was not until the next day that Horace could discover—and only after a long, painful, and exciting search—where his

cousin Cyril was lying, and had lain all night, in extreme suffering and misery.

The night after the storming of the Russian intrenched camp, Horace slept soundly—the deep sleep of that utter exhaustion consequent to intense bodily toil, the heat of the march before the engagement, and over exhaustion of the mind. He did awake once or twice, to see around him, as in a confused dream, the darkness of the chilly night, and, that something of the picturesque might not be wanting, groups of soldiers, lying or sitting, and smoking or chatting round fires of turpentine, olive and willow trees, of Russian muskets and gun carriages, that flamed high above their heads, and caused the piles of muskets to glitter in light. These were the men who, but a few hours before, had been amid all that wild carnage, and were now quietly toasting little scraps of food in the blaze by which they warmed themselves, and which lit up their bronzed faces with a ruddy glow, and displayed their varied and, in many instances, torn and blood-stained uniforms.

Some were moaning over a wounded arm, or a bloody and recently bandaged stump, which they rested on a bed of branches, and thousands were lying about, in every attitude expressive of exhaustion.

So most of the army passed the night after we won the Alma ; though some who were less worn out than others spent it in seeking over the field for those whom few or none could help them to find.

By the first ray of dawn, and while the red sun was rising above those hills that, on one side, look down on Simpheropol, and on the other overhang the windings of the fatal Alma, Horace, with a few of the Fusileers, had left the bivouac, and, without seeking food or refreshment, engaged in the melancholy and heart-rending task of searching over the field for his cousin, Cyril Wedderburn.

The two bandsmen by whom he had been borne away had been killed subsequently, and no one could say where they had laid him down, to bleed to death of his wounds, too probably.

Horace thought sadly of the many fine fellows gone for ever—those whose faces he should never look upon again ; Jack Probyn, with whom he had played so many keen games at billiards ; Bingham, whose handsome figure and winning manner made him a favourite with all women ; Joyce, poor old Singleton (the man with the secret sorrow), and merry little Meredyth Pomfret, who was such a first-rate “bat,” and so many of the brave rank and file too. He was full of depressing and harrowing thoughts.

Unstripped by “death-hunters,” or a plundering peasantry (as those were who fell in the wars of Wellington, and left bare

and ghastly under the eye of heaven), the soldiers here were all lying, whether dead or wounded, fully clothed and accoutred, just as the shot had struck them down in their ranks.

Many of the killed lay on their back, with their arms up-lifted, as if still levelling their muskets, in all the cataleptic stiffness which so often results from gunshot wounds. "The upstretched arms of dead men were ghastly in the eyes of some ; others thought they could envy the soldier released at last from his toil, and encountering no moment of interval between hard fighting and death." And over this scene rose the cloudless sun of a lovely September morning, glowing on the tender green of the willow and olive groves tossing their leaves in the warm, soft breeze, and suggestive of delicious tranquillity rather than the carnage of war.

The unfortunate braves of the Welsh Fusileers lay over each other literally in piles, amid dark pools of blood, in which the flies were battenning ; and wherever the cannon shot had bowled in their deadly career, lay bodies without legs, or heads, or arms, crushed, rent, and torn in some instances out of all semblance of humanity ; and there were grey haired officers who had fought in other lands, in India, Persia, and Afghanistan, lying side by side with our poor boy-subalterns, slain in all the splendour of their *first* red coat—fresh from school and from their parents' arms.

Many a familiar face of his own corps was seen by Horace as he passed along, but they were pallid and still ; no glance of recognition came back from the fixed and glazed eyes ; no smile was on the open marble mouth. Among others, he saw young Meredyth Pomfret, lying dead with his hands as if yet clutching the colour-staff, the belt of which was still over his shoulder. He turned away with a sinking heart, and he knew that Cyril could not be there.

All who could speak were inquiring for water, or to learn when they would be taken to the rear and have their sufferings alleviated. Others begged only for a match or a pipeful of tobacco.

In their long grey coats, in many instances cuffed and collared with scarlet, the grim Russians lay thick, like swathes in a harvest field, along the Kourganè Hill, and all about the great redoubt. Many had fallen in the act of reloading, and lay with a steel ram rod in their hand, or a half-bitten cartridge between their teeth. A ghastly grin or defiant smile was visible in some of their dead faces ; and in many instances there were men of the 23rd and other corps of the Light Division, who appeared to have perished in the act of supplication or entreaty.

These were the wounded whom the merciless Russians butchered, when the division wavered on the crest of the hill.

Hairy knapsacks, glazed helmets, and the coarse, clumsy firelocks of the Russian infantry lay scattered there in thousands, just as they had been cast away; and clouds of ammunition paper were whirling over the sward.

Many acts of perfidy, similar to that by which Cyril fell, had been perpetrated by the enemy. In some instances our soldiers were shot down by the wounded whom they were supplying with water from their canteens. In this manner, Captain Eddington of the 95th perished under the eyes of his brother, who fell in the attempt to avenge him; and enraged by such treacheries, our soldiers clubbed their muskets and dashed out the brains of the perpetrators, as creatures totally unworthy of mercy or life.

Horace felt his heart growing more and more sick as he looked around him, and heard the incessant and afflicting exclamations of suffering, the result of wounds of every kind, and in all parts of the tender human form; stabs by bayonets, cuts by swords, musket shots, and the more dreadful casualties inflicted by cannon balls, grape, canister, and splintered shells; and if his tongue clove to the roof of his mouth with the intensity of his thirst, he thought, "What must these poor creatures be enduring!" But ere long the regimental and naval surgeons, with fatigue parties and seamen from the fleet, began to be busy among them.

Wandering down from the heights by the extreme British right, he came among the wounded of the French left flank, and there the Zouaves were lying thick as leaves in autumn. Two, who had each a limb bandaged tight by a bloody handkerchief, were seated with their backs against a large stone, smoking cigarettes, while a pretty vivandière, in a smart blue jacket and scarlet skirt, with the number of some regiment embroidered on her cap and shoulder-straps, was tripping about giving mouthfulls of brandy from her little barrel.

"Is she not charming—Pauline of ours!" exclaimed one of the smokers, admiringly.

"Mais certainement oui, charmante!" responded the other, and with great politeness they both saluted Horace as he passed them, though unable to rise; "and like ourselves she has breakfasted *à la carte* on grapes and cold water, most likely."

"Your regiment must have suffered severely," said he, "if we are to judge by the numbers lying here."

"Oui, Monsieur, we have lost twice as many as we did at Constantine. Diable! la fortune de la guerre est bien capricieuse!"

"True, Adrien," said the other, laughing; "but we gave those

Muscovites a sharp taste of our little Charlemagnes—our cabbage-cutters ;” for so the French soldiers name their sword-bayonets.

A man on the ground with his head propped upon some loose stones, attracted the eye of Horace at a little distance, for he was an officer and in the scarlet uniform of the Royal Fusileers, and proved to be Major Singleton !

He hastened to him, and found that he was just expiring of wounds, with a staff-surgeon, a somewhat elderly officer, had just been examining with great tenderness and care. The latter held up his hand warningly to Horace, as if to say, “Do not speak—it is useless.” He had been pierced by two balls, each of which had inflicted a mortal wound. His filmy eye dilated as Horace bent over him ; then his jaw fell, the breath passed away, and the brave soldier who, yesterday had been face to face with the Russians, was now face to face with—his Maker.

“We can but leave him till the burial party comes,” said Dr. Riversdale, with great emotion ; for, by a singular fatality, it was in his hands, almost in his arms, that the first husband of Isabel Vane—poor Conyers Singleton, died ! “Another officer of your corps,” he added, “is lying near the river severely wounded—a Captain Wedderburn.”

“In which direction ?” asked Horace, starting.

“Where those turpentine bushes are. I have just dressed his wounds.”

“Oh, how shall I thank you ! It is he I have been in search of. Are the wounds dangerous ?”

“One may prove so. A ball has entered the left breast, and injuring the lung, has passed out under the shoulder-blade. I am not without hopes of him, however.”

Horace hurried in the direction indicated, and there amid the turpentine bushes, the branches of which were quite alive with brown larks and golden linnets, unscared by the din of yesterday, in full melody, lay him he sought !

Cyril was lying on his back and breathing heavily ; his handsome face was pale as marble, and with his thick curly brown hair and well-curved moustache, Horace thought he looked like a manly and beautiful statue. His eyes were closed, but a quiver of agony at times passed over his features. His epaulettes had been torn off, probably by some passing Tartar of Burliuk. His uniform was open and sorely soiled, for bloody bandages traversed his breast. His whole aspect was intensely pitiable and forlorn. Alas for Cyril ! once so particular in his toilet, in the quality of his perfumes, the exquisite fit of his gloves and boots, and the general perfection of his apparel. His sword was still lying near his hand, and on hearing a step, he instinctively

clutched it nervously, thus causing the blood to well forth anew from the wound in his breast.

Poor Horace was deeply moved.

"Oh, Cyril," thought he, "if that poor mother who dotes on you were to see you thus, sodden and damp with dew, splashed with blood and pierced with wounds! Cyril!"

He opened his eyes, and a faint smile of recognition passed over his face as he took the hand of his cousin, who knelt by his side.

"Thank Heaven you have escaped, Horace," said he.

"Yes, Cyril, my dear fellow. Would to God that you had been so fortunate. I had my left epaulette shot away by one bullet, my cap knocked off by another, and my sword hand grazed by the splinter of a shell, but I am untouched. If that Russian scoundrel—the spy——"

"He may have got his deserts by this time and be lower than he has brought me. You will write to my father,—say, to break all this gently to my mother; but then she will unfortunately see the Gazette first!" said Cyril, and now his voice failed him.

After a time he asked—

"Who of ours have fallen, and who escaped?"

"I know not who have escaped, but I know that Bingham, Jack Probyn, Joyce, and Pomfret are all gone. Ned Elton had a leg smashed under the colours, and poor Conyers Singleton is lying dead among some stones yonder."

"Poor Joyce—his wife and children—he loved them so!"

"The colonel had his black horse shot under him, and then led the regiment on foot."

"I feel utterly sick of life, Horace. I hope I shall die—and I must, if this agony endures," said Cyril in a low voice through his clenched teeth.

"Do not speak or think thus. You shall soon be comfortably cared for. The wounded are ordered to be sent on board the fleet, and I shall see you off among the first."

Yesterday Cyril really had a mad desire to court danger—to tempt death, but not to be stricken down thus—almost assassinated, when assisting in an act of mercy! Yet why should he have wished for death? he began to think now. Did not his tender mother, his affectionate and manly father, love him, and Bob too, after his somewhat cold and legal fashion? All his brother officers were his friends. The passing emotion was morbid and ungrateful; yet, as he lay there, he sighed in his soul for one glance from Mary's eye—one touch of Mary's hand again!

Just as Horace was about to leave him in quest of assistance, a little midshipman with four seamen bearing stretchers passed

near, and he hailed them. Into one of these he was carefully, even tenderly, lifted, and conveyed towards the shore, while Horace, with a prayer of hope that he might recover soon—for he and Cyril were especial friends—turned away to attend to his duties with the now shattered regiment—and these duties were the reverse of cheerful.

Many vessels sailed with their melancholy freights for Scutari; but on the voyage of three hundred and thirty miles which lie between that place and the mouth of the Alma, many a body was committed, coffinless, to the waves of the Euxine; for many brave fellows were uselessly shipped who were mortally wounded, and through routine, circumlocution, and infamous parsimony, "there were not medical necessities on board for five out of fifty sufferers."*

"Ten men per company to bury the dead!" was the order issued to each regiment on the morning of the 21st September.

During the two days subsequent to the battle, Horace was so busy with one of the working parties who were ordered to separate the dead from the wounded; to bury the former and get the latter out of the field; collecting the abandoned Russian arms and destroying them by fire, or otherwise, that he could barely snatch a few minutes to dispatch a letter to Gwenny—think what his aunt might of it, he could not resist the temptation of writing to *her*—with a brief detail of all that had transpired.

And from this pleasant office which brought her bright face and sweet presence and all the distinct *individuality* of the girl so vividly before him, it was hard to turn to the grim task of having those ghastly trenches dug, tenanted, and filled up.

Though reflective, he was not much of a sentimentalist; yet as he stood by one of those hecatombs and heard the solemn words of the surpliced regimental chaplain, reading the English burial service—now that the fury of the battle had passed away, his soul was stirred. "The bitter pains of eternal death;" "The certain hope of a resurrection to eternal life;" "For a thousand years are in Thy sight as yesterday, seeing that is passed as a watch of the night. As soon as thou scatterest them, they are even as a sleep, and fade away suddenly like the grass."

An old sergeant of the Welsh Fusileers, whose son lay in that grave, all belted and accoutred as when in life, made the responses tremulously, and Horace felt moved by an emotion of great pity.

To what end, or for what useful purpose had all this carnage been? Why had all those strong and, many of them, handsome young men been cut off thus in the flower of their manhood?

* Letter of a medical officer.

For a time he thought war horrible—an utter desecration of God's fair earth ; but anon the trench was filled, the drums beat for dinner, and the living soon forgot those dead with whom they might be sleeping on the morrow.

“My poor fellows ! there lie one hundred and sixty of them !” said Sir Edward Elton, as he stood at the head of the long trench, with his sword arm slung in his crimson sash ; “by this time they have learned the grand secret that lies between Time and Eternity. Well—well ! God rest them ! General and drum-boy, king and clown, we must all lie alike in our graves ; there is no distinction there !”

CHAPTER LV.

WOUNDED AND MISSING.

THE summer was past, and the mellow tints of its successor were beginning to steal over the woods at Willowdean. September had come, the month of in-gathering, and brown autumn, the evening of the year, was creeping on.

There is usually then a great variety of tints in the Scottish woods ; all gradations of green, from the tender paleness of the willow to the bronze-like branches of the sombre pine, mingling with every shade of fading foliage, from bright yellow to russet, brown, and red.

Autumn was beautiful as ever in the fertile Merse ; the cattle lowed as usual on the pastoral hills of the Lammermuirs, over which the sun cast the flying shadows of the white clouds that came from the German Sea.

In the household at Willowdean, as elsewhere over all the British Isles, the public prints were eagerly scanned for their contents at that time ; and the slow progress of our army in the East was watched with the keenest interest, for there were few in the land who had not either a relative or a friend who faced the pestilence at Varna, and the perils of war that followed it.

And every letter that came from the camp added to the craving for another ; but during this anxious and eventful autumn, Willowdean House did not seem to wear its usual aspect. Lady Wedderburn had not her general circle of guests, and no friends were invited to pass the shooting season with Sir John. Robert was not much of a sportsman, so the gun-room was unentered, the preserves remained undisturbed, and the speckled grouse and the golden pheasants kept holiday together, the latter venturing even to feed among the barnyard fowls at the home farm.

Robert Wedderburn was far from being insensible to the beauty of Gwenny, and still more to the pleasing fact that she was an heiress ; and, regardless alike of his brother and cousin, he had striven to effect a footing in her good graces from the time Horace departed ; but strove in vain : for Gwenny's impulsive and susceptible heart was far away with our army of the East. His futile attentions, however, had been apparent enough to Lady Wedderburn, and had secretly pleased her.

"If Gwenny should happen not to care for Cyril," thought she, "let Robert have her by all means. Her fortune would quite enable him to cut the Temple and the dry study of the law."

Alone, the girl thought ever of the absent Horace Ramornie ; and all the scenes they had been wont to visit, even the objects of nature, seemed to the fanciful Gwenny full of his memory by association of ideas. The gurgle of the clear trouting stream that came from the hills and flowed under the old bridge in the *Dean*, or *Den*, which being fringed by overarching willows, gave a name to the place ; the voices of the birds, the thrush, the blackbird and woodlark, among the shrubberies of the garden and the stately trees of the lawn, where they always sang most joyously after a shower had gemmed every leaf and flower ; the sweet perfume of the clover fields, where many a day they had ridden together and rushed their horses at the fences and turf-dykes, all somehow reminded Gwenny of Horace, the first and only love of her passionate girlhood, now far away facing peril and hardship, it might be to return no more !

That a change had come over her, even when visitors were present, was perceptible alike to Sir John and to Lady Wedderburn. The latter flattered herself that she was at last thinking of Cyril—that she had begun to see his merits, and to remember how attractive he was in person and manner ; but the former more shrewdly suspected the real state of matters, for Gwenny could not control her change of colour when the name of Horace was mentioned incidentally, though she betrayed no emotion whatever when that of his cousin occurred.

She never opened the piano now. To sing when Horace was no longer there to listen or to accompany her ; to laugh and talk or seem to enjoy the society of others when he was absent—oh, what might he not be enduring !—proved a bitter ordeal to her ; and to her kind uncle's observant eye it was evident that the girl was love-sick, but time he knew would cure all that.

We have shown by her treatment of the hapless Mary Lennox that Lady Wedderburn was neither an unjust nor unkind woman. The presence of her son in the field, and the obvious risks he ran there, led her, unlike Lady Ernescleugh, who was immersed in the gaieties of London, to turn her attention to works of

charity and benevolence, even more than was her wont ; to schemes for the amelioration of the poor ; to schools, emigration, little allotments of land on the estate—for her husband denied her nothing ; to teaching, visiting the peasantry and so forth, a system which soon caused her and Gwenny to be idolized at Willowdean, for she felt when doing all this good as if she gave hostages to Heaven for her son's safety.

Like every one else who had friends in the army of Lord Raglan, the Wedderburns were kept on the rack of keen expectancy during all that memorable week which ended the month of September. Even in mighty London every kind of business gave place or became secondary to this anxiety and anticipation. All knew that the allies had landed at Eupatoria, and all calculated to a nicety the day on which a battle must be fought—a battle in which the dearest and best-beloved of many might fall.

But it was not until the morning of the tenth day, *after* we won the Alma, that faint rumours through mercantile sources were heard in London, and with that evening came the telegram which announced the total defeat of the Russians, and that again, as in the glorious wars of old, our arms had been victorious !

By the following day (Sunday) it was known in Scotland, and in remote places where no electric wire could flash the intelligence ; for a whisper seemed to pass over all the land—a whisper which at first was full of exaggerations and mistakes, but it found an echo in every heart, from the apple bowers of Devonshire to the storm-beat isles of Orkney—a whisper of the great battle that had been fought in the strange land so far away.

More keen and agonizing now became the expectancy. Lady Wedderburn thought of her son ; Gwenny of her lover Horace, —wounded or dying ; yes, it might be dead and buried afar off in that hitherto almost unknown land, so far as we were concerned, and the names of the places in which sounded so strange to the ears of those at home. That already all might be over for ever, was the haunting thought that wrung the aching heart of each.

Three days more passed ere Lord Raglan's telegraphed account of the battle in the *London Gazette* reached the secluded little town in the Merse ; and with a hand trembling Sir John unfolded the morning paper which Gervase Asloane had taken from the despatch box, while Lady Wedderburn and Gwenny quitted their places at the breakfast table, and drew near him with their faces pale and their eyes so full of eagerness and fear that an expression of expostulation escaped the calmer Robert ; and even the white-haired butler, and the stolid and be-whiskered footmen in plush, paused to listen for intelligence.

Skipping all the details, Sir John glanced nervously and hurriedly through the paper, seeking first the casualty lists of the battle ; and after running his eye down the regimental numbers, he suddenly exclaimed—

"Kate—Kate! oh, my God, our poor boy!" and crushing up the paper, buried his face in his hands.

While both Lady Wedderburn and Gwenny burst into tears, fearing the worst, and a cry of terror escaped little Miss M'Caw, Robert quietly spread out the paper and saw the fatal line which had so moved his father. It came after the list of killed :

"Royal Fusileers ; Captain Cyril Wedderburn severely wounded. Since MISSING!"

CHAPTER LVI

THE WINTER OF THE YEAR.

WHEN a little more composed they began to consider this catastrophe in its various lights. That he was wounded severely they could not doubt, but that he should be *missing* was a most perplexing and harrowing thought.* He might be a prisoner in the hands of the Russians ; or he might too probably have crept away, as many did, to bleed to death and die unseen—a terrible thought! and thus his fate might never be known.

His pale mother had but one distinct idea—Cyril was wounded and missing too ; wounded and suffering she knew not, and might never know, in what fashion or degree ; and her motherly hands were not there to nurse and tend him. Her pet boy—the apple of her eye—Cyril, always so tender and loving to her!

All her worst, her darkest, and most terrible anticipations seemed to be fulfilled now—so suddenly too, in the first battle. Oh, that she could fly to him! Oh, that she had acceded to the Ernescleugh scheme of the yacht voyage! Horace had escaped ; but why was Cyril missing? Horace could, should, and *must* know all about it. And, as she wrung her hands she thought, amid all the luxury and splendour of her home, how futile it was to reckon on earthly joys, they were at best so fleeting!

Then as she looked over the lists and saw how many other mothers must be suffering even as she then suffered, she prayed for strength and calmness to bear her cross ; and prayed too as only a mother can do, who yearningly supplicates for her son's safety and cure.

* From the time of the first landing in the Crimea till the capture of Sebastopol, September 8, 1855, no less than 13 of our officers, 23 sergeants, and 468 rank and file were reported missing and never traced.

A few more anxious days and the same despatch-box which has already figured in our story contained tidings from the seat of war—the letter from Horace to Gwendolayne Wedderburn. It simply announced that we had won a great victory; and then detailed the mode in which Cyril had been wounded.

This added anger, even an emotion of rage, to the grief of his mother on learning that he had fallen when performing an act of mercy and compassion. How bitterly in her heart she thought of that treacherous Russian! If her son should indeed die of the wounds his hand inflicted, the malediction of a sorrowing mother would follow his assassin to the grave! Never, never would she forget or forgive

“The deep damnation of his taking off.”

For Gwenny's behoof Horace could not resist saying a little about himself:

“I had a narrow escape from a shot, nearly the last fired by the Russian artillery. I was in the act of closing up the ranks of my slender company (Probyn by this time was killed), when a *round black spot* caught my eye. I knew what it was by instinct, Gwenny; for I had heard it said by old soldiers, that you can never *see* a cannon ball unless you are in its line. I threw myself flat on the turf with a breathless exclamation, and at that instant it cut in two one of my men, and his covering file also. I felt the wind of the shot as it passed over me!

“We are eager to attack Sebastopol before the fortifications are increased, as they are sure to be if any more delay ensues; and when they echo to the drums of the British Grenadiers, the latter will prove better arbiters than those absurd Quaker fellows who lately tried the peace-at-any-price dodge with old Nick, the Emperor. We go in for any amount of shot and shell, risk and danger here; we endure much more than I can describe; but I care little how the time passes as it is not spent with *you* at home. My very soul seems to go with this to you—*all*,” he felt himself compelled to add, “and my tears are falling on the paper, Gwenny. I know not what I write, or what I have written; I have no time to read it over, for already the bugles are sounding for the advanced guard to fall in, ‘as we move at once when the last of the dead are buried.’”

And Gwenny's voice broke as she read that letter which poor Horace had penned on a drum-head, amid the harrowing carnage of the the field—amid that terrible grey “acre of Russian wounded,” groaning for water, tobacco, and sour-kroust, while his thoughts travelled forward to the time when the white hands of her he loved would open and read it, and when her dark eyes might look so earnestly and sweetly over the lines his hand had written, perhaps drop a tear on them in secret and unseen.

"It is always of himself, and not of my Cyril he writes," said Lady Wedderburn, almost with anger; "but continue."

"Already Gwenny," she read, "our once gay uniforms are in rags, the lace black, the epaulettes vanished. Our once splendid bands have been turned into the ranks, or are decimated by cholera and the bullet. We have no mess, and all the brilliance of military life in time of peace has gone. We are wretched and filthy, tattered, unkempt and unshaven as gipsies, or the homeless poor of London."

"He calls you simply 'Gwenny,'" said Lady Wedderburn, looking over her gold eyeglasses; "it is scarcely courteous, as I have often said you are *not* cousins."

Gwenny blushed in silence, but the blush was seen and noted too by Robert.

"He does not seem to have fallen in again with that odious fellow Chesters," said Sir John.

"Horace is frightfully vague about Cyril after the battle," resumed Lady Wedderburn, who could not but resent something in the tone of the letter; "he says that he saw him borne *towards* the boats, but why did he not see him carried on board of the ship personally? Oh, my boy—my poor boy may have died, or been taken prisoner on the way!"

"Scarcely prisoner, in rear of our lines," said Robert, sententially.

"And if dead, dear Kate," added Sir John, in a low and husky voice, "he must have been found, and not returned as missing. I cannot understand it."

And so for a time sorrow and perplexity reigned at Willowdean, while all there waited each successive mail in hope and fear; and while letters and cards of condolence poured in from all the county, together with an address from the inhabitants of the little Burgh of Barony, signed by the Bailie thereof, and an exhortation from the Reverend Gideon M'Guffog, stuffed with the usual stereotyped crumbs of comfort.

Though she sorrowed for Cyril, and deplored the mystery that seemed to envelope his fate, Gwenny nightly, and on her knees, thanked God for the safety of Horace; but then natural anxiety suggested the fear of what might not have happened since that 22nd of September, when he wrote his hasty letter on the Russian drum, and the bugles were sounding for the advance to the front!

On discovering the mistake in the Gazette, Horace lost no time in telegraphing direct to Willowdean, stating that Cyril was *not* missing, but was in the hospital at Scutari, and was believed to be doing well. Then he further wrote to mention that the announcement which gave such pain to the family, was caused by his inability to report to the adjutant who made up

the lists, that he had seen his cousin carried out of the field by seamen, as he was busy for two entire days with a working party interring the dead ; and now the army was before Sebastopol, in the harbour of which, to bar all entrance, the Russians had sunk their splendid fleet, adding the crews, in battalions, to the strength of the garrison.

Some endearing terms to Gwenny were perceptible enough in this letter ; but his aunt felt that she could forgive the writer out of the great relief he gave her heart.

Cyril was safe, and, as she hoped, recovering !

The newspapers teemed with harrowing details of the war ; the bombardment of Sebastopol began ; the terrible slaughter of our Light Brigade at Balaclava made all Britain thrill with sorrow and enthusiasm ; the two battles in the valley of Inkerman followed ; the carnage of the last saw Horace a captain ; but still he escaped without a wound ; and then began the protracted sufferings in the trenches and rifle-pits—the horrors of the close siege during a Crimean winter.

The letters of Horace were always cheerful ; but he had now learned the policy of writing them to Lady Wedderburn alone.

The winter of the year came on with great severity at home—with greater still by the shores of the Black Sea. Flights of wild Norwegian pigeons were seen on the hills of Fife and Lothian, and such are always a sign of heavy and protracted snows in the north of Europe.

It was Christmas-day at Willowdean, as it was all over God's fair world. A few friends, the minister and his wife, the Baron-Baillie, and so forth, were there ; but when Lady Wedderburn saw the luxuries around her, the blazing fire, the glittering crystal, the fine linen, rich china service and massive plate, the chandelier decorated with shining holly and scarlet berries, the various courses at the table, the fish, and beef or mutton ; the fowls, puffs, custards, and creams ; the rich wines placed before Sir John, after being solemnly and carefully decanted from cobwebby old bottles in secret binns known to Asloane only, she sighed and thought with sorrow of her poor Cyril, lying in his hospital bed, a wretched pallet, fed on meagre broth or *bouillon* ; and she thought too of those who were shivering amid the mud of the frozen trenches, or dying of cold and starvation within sound of the bells of Sebastopol, or crawling back to their huts half dead with exhaustion, bearded, tattered, and squalid ; and where their only luxury might be a little half-ground and half-green coffee, boiled on a wretched fire, made of damp wood from the nearest thicket, or the wrecks made by the great hurricane in the Euxine.

Gwenny's astonishment when she found one winter morning her window panes all frosted over in the fashion of thistle

leaves, was great indeed, and she wondered if the cold was as great in the Crimea as at Willowdean. And in common with all the ladies in the land, she and Miss M'Caw knitted all manner of worsted things—a labour of love for our poor soldiers.

Crisp lay the snow over all the level park, over all the hills, and nowhere so crisp as in the broad gravelled walks of the garden. Long icicles hung from every eave and cornice; the Leader and even portions of the Tweed were frozen hard, and the linns where erst the torrent roared between rock and scaur, were congealed and white as the beard of Father Christmas.

It was a season when the flakes lingered long on the Lammermuirs. The white snowdrops did not appear till April; and the purple lilacs and gold laburnums, the pink and white hawthorns, did not bloom till after midsummer in the woods of Willowdean; but ere that time came great events had taken place there, as well as elsewhere.

After the first month of spring, mail succeeded mail as usual from the East; but to the terror and grief of Gwenny, the letters of Horace ceased altogether, and a great horror filled the heart of the girl, lest something fatal had occurred!

On the other hand, to give joy to the soul of Lady Wedderburn, there came to her a letter from Cyril himself! He stated that at Scutari all had nearly been over with him; but he had found one of the dearest and most loving little nurses in the world; and that through God's grace and her care he was now almost well—quite convalescent, able to ride about the streets, to have a sail on the Bosphorus, and bully the extortionate Caïquejees. Then suddenly in one letter he seemed to write in an agitated and disturbed state of mind, saying that a great grief had come upon him, and that he would not—yea, might never—return home on leave as his mother wished and urged; but he was to rejoin his regiment, and be “in at the death of Sebastopol.”

The silence of Horace, and the mysterious grief to which Cyril so abruptly alluded, occasioned endless surmise and much perplexity at Willowdean; but now spring had come, and with it came a letter from Lady Ernescleugh, then in England. After the usual details of the gaieties of some friend's country-house where she had spent much of the winter, she wrote thus:

“The commander of my son's yacht writes to me stating that she is quite ready for sea, and I mean to sail with her for the East next month. Lord Cardigan's yacht and others are now in the harbour of Balacava. *Will you accompany me?* Many officers' wives are content to endure the discomforts of a residence at Constantinople, for the purpose of being nearer the scene of those terrible events which are daily occurring; and there, or even at Malta, letters and news will reach one much

sooner than when in England. I am sick of London, and Ernescleugh is odious to me without Everard. The doctors have prescribed a change of scene, and I do so long to see my dear boy, or be near him. As yet, thank God! he has only been slightly wounded at Inkerman; but matters will go hard with me if I do not bring him home in the yacht, and his father also, from Corfu."

This letter, together with her desire to unravel the mystery of Cyril's conduct, which she attributed to a love freak for some Turkish damsel (an odious creature, who wore trousers, sat cross-legged, smoked a chibouk, and eat pilau with her fingers), together with the strange silence of Horace, decided Lady Wedderburn on travelling with her friend.

So slowly had passed the days at Willowdean, that Gwenny hailed with rapture the prospect of a change, and the anticipated voyage. To see those places towards which the thoughts and hearts of all were turned! Perhaps—oh! what joy—to see Horace himself! The girl became wild with delight. Stamboul, Varna, the Crimea, and the Black Sea should no longer be as mere names to her when she had seen and could remember them distinctly, as she did "dear Madras and papa's lovely house in the Choultry."

And so it was arranged that Miss M'Caw was to govern at Willowdean in their absence, and that Robert Wedderburn should escort them to London, whither Sir John—who was in Parliament representing some snug little English borough in the Conservative interest—had preceded them.

"My foolish Kate," he wrote to Lady Wedderburn, "in this proposed Crimean escapade of yours, you will be compelled to behold many a scene of horror you do not reckon upon!"

CHAPTER LVII.

SCUTARI.

IN the reference to Cyril's letters, we have somewhat anticipated a portion of his story.

The steam frigate on board of which he had been conveyed, ran straight for Scutari with her freight of sufferers, whose number lessened every hour, as the mortally wounded, or those who were totally exhausted by loss of blood, expired, and were shot over to leeward, tied up in a blanket, or, more simply still, in their grey great-coats. Cyril endured great agony from his principal wound, together with an extreme difficulty of respiration, and even when awake he lay as one in a kind of dream, in the cabin generously resigned to his use by an officer of the

ship. At times he seemed still to hear the din of battle in his ears; the sharp roar of the musketry, the booming of the artillery, the crash of exploding shells and rockets, the demon-like yells of the Russians, and the tumultuous cheering of our own troops as they closed in upon them, and the cries of the wounded, as they rolled in their agony, and tore up the grass with their fingers. But this was only the result of an overheated fancy, for the only sound he heard was the rush of the shining waves as they passed the open gun-port while the frigate sped on her way.

On the third day after the battle he was very languid and weak, yet his listless eyes could see, through the gun-port, that land was in sight. Beautiful green hills were there, tall minarets of snowy whiteness, great round leaden domes; and recognising Scutari as they neared it, he closed his eyes wearily.

After a time he was sensible of being lifted on a stretcher tenderly and kindly, by the hands of sailors, and found himself in the open air and on a quay, with many more of the wounded, surrounded by a staring crowd of picturesque-looking Greeks, in scarlet fezzes, blue breeches, and laced jackets; stolid looking Turks, with great turbans; swarthy Arabs, Negro slaves, and filthy Jews, with their sly, gleaming eyes and long gaberdines; all of whom the Marine escort put back with their bayonets, and without much ceremony. Through this motley mob he was conveyed, past the magnificent pile of buildings which an Italian architect constructed as a barrack for the Turkish troops (but which was then full of our own convalescents), to the hospital, which was filling fast with wounded, as ship after ship arrived from the shore of the Alma with her human cargo, in the shape of mangled, emaciated, moaning, and quivering unfortunates, in uniforms that became rags, sodden and saturated with mud and gore; and they were laid side by side in the wards, pell mell, many of them on the bare floor, where, through want of sufficient attendance, the atmosphere soon became tainted with the horrid odour of undried blood; causing the shocked onlooker to long for the day—if it will ever come—when the shedding of it should cease, and “when war shall be no more.”

The name and rank of each man, together with the number of his regiment, were asked, as the patients were borne in. Some could reply to all that was required of them; but many a poor fellow was past utterance, and could only gaze with listless and lack-lustre eyes at the questioner, who would enter him in the hospital books as “a private of the Seventh Foot,” “corporal, Twenty-third Fusileers,” or the “Guards,” or “Cameron Highlanders,” and so forth.

Thus they were carried in, in too many instances to die un-

named and unknown, by their fate recalling the touching lines that appeared in a periodical :—

- “ Into a ward of unwhitewashed walls,
Where the dead and the dying lay—
Wounded by bayonets, shells, and balls—
Somebody's Darling was borne one day.
- “ Somebody's Darling ! so young and so brave,
Wearing still on his pale, sweet face,
So soon to be hid by the dust of the grave,
The lingering light of his boyhood's grace.
- “ Somebody wept when he marched away,
Looking so handsome, brave and grand ;
Somebody's kiss on his forehead lay ;
Somebody clung to his parting hand.”

Cyril's room was in a lofty portion of the hospital, and, from a window which was near his bed, he could see the blue Bosphorus sweeping by the base of the dark-green mountains of Scutari, and all the far-famed Golden Horn—seeming such indeed, for the waters round it were tinted with all the splendour of the Eastern sun. And, while thinking sadly of the slaughter that had fallen upon his regiment, and of the faces he never more should see, his eyes gazed with a species of vacant wonder on Constantinople, which seemed like a cluster of fairy cities beside the strait, each a very wilderness of shining domes, painted cupolas, gilded and red-tiled kiosks, tall minarets, and marble fountains, the snow-white palace of the Sultan towering over all ; the background, dark cypresses and hills, and, in the middle distance, a forest of masts, each bearing a flag, for the waters of the Bosphorus were full of merchant ships, war-steamers, swift caiques that cleft them as if instinct with life, and shoals of glittering dolphins surging past from wave to wave.

For a time he was tormented by the groans and cries of an unfortunate young Chasseur d'Afrique, who, by some mistake, had been brought away with our wounded, and who shared his room. The left shoulder of this unhappy creature had been shattered by a large grapeshot, and the wound was perfectly incurable ; but life was wonderfully tenacious within him. On the second day his ravings ceased, and turned to prayer :—

“ *Sainte Vierge, priez pour moi—pour moi !* ” he would say imploringly, and then murmur softly, with quivering lips and tearful eyes, “ *Ma Mère—O, ma Mère !* ” in that touching and childlike spirit of devotion which the French soldier has peculiarly for his mother.

On waking one morning, Cyril found that he was alone ; for the poor Chasseur had been taken to his last home, near those solemn cypresses which cast their shadows on that city of tombs,

outside the walls of Scutari—the seven miles of cemetery where the followers of the Prophet lie.

For many days Cyril Wedderburn hovered between life and death, while patients poured into the hospital so fast, that the surgeons and nurses had more work on their hands than they could attend to. There was a perpetual and offensive odour of poultices, *bouillon*, preserved meats and jellies about the place, as they were carried to and fro; while the rending of the shirts and sheets of the dead into bandages for the living, together with the manufacture of cushions and pillows for limbs that had undergone amputation, went briskly forward in the passages and yard without.

A night of restlessness and weariness—with its occasional waking fits, during which, to the eye of the sick or ailing, a kind of phantasmagoria peopled the darkness, strange faces come of it, and fancy fills the air with odd sounds—was passing slowly away. Dawn stole into Cyril's room. The Bosphorus and all the domes and windows of Constantinople were beginning to glitter in light, as the sun rose above the hills of Scutari; and like many others in that abode of suffering, Cyril woke with a sigh, to think that another weary day of pain and inertia was before him. So faint and weak had he become, that there were times when he wished to die, and would mutter, as he lay with closed eyes—"If I have not done much good in the world, I have not done much harm, and now I could pass peacefully away."

He was too dim-sighted by the loss of blood to be able to read, even had he been supplied with books, and thus his days were days of utter weariness.

On this morning his throat was parched, and he called feebly to the soldier who usually attended him for water; but the soldier—one of the Black Watch, whose left hand had been shattered by a canister-shot—did not reply, so Cyril sighed and wearily closed his eyes again.

Something like a tear fell on his face, and starting, he looked up, but only to shrink back with emotions of alarm and fear, so he covered his pale face with his thin hands.

"Cyril," said a voice, and a sob mingled with his name. Then he trembled, for it sounded like a voice that once had power to thrill his heart to its inmost core.

Was it all a dream, or was he going mad? Had the excitement of the battle, or the crash of the bullet as it traversed his body, given his brain a shock so rude, that sense and imagination wandered now?

No! she on whose shoulder his aching head reclined, whose hand caressed his now tangled hair, whose tear had fallen on his cheek, and whose loving, yet deep and thoughtful eyes

seemed to speak of a strange future, and of a sorrowful, it might be awful, past, was—Mary Lennox.

Cyril had been dreaming of his mother, and it had seemed as if her voice—the one he loved most and best in boyhood—was murmuring in his ear, calling him back to life ; and now it was the voice of Mary, and her soft earnest face, with a mingled expression of tenderness and agony, was turned towards his own.

She was very pale, rather emaciated, and dressed in a plain black costume, somewhat like that of a Sister of Charity, but without a hood.

“ You here, Mary—here in Scutari—in this frightful hospital, and attending me ? Oh, explain this riddle, or I shall go mad—speak to me—place your hands in mine ! ” said he, huskily, in a low and imploring voice, as if he feared she would melt into thin air. But she answered, calmly—

“ I arrived here, Cyril, three days ago from London, with Miss Nightingale and the staff of ladies who have come to nurse the wounded. Oh, Cyril Wedderburn, what was my emotion—my horror—when I learned that you were here ! ”

“ Mary, it is frightful this, such work—such scenes—you will perish. Scenes of utter horror and affright ! What madness brought you here ? ”

“ It was no madness, but the prompting of my own heart, Cyril—a light that came to me from Heaven above, and the hope that I might be nearer—*you* ; and now, now, oh my God ! ” she suddenly exclaimed, while placing her interlaced fingers on her forehead, and looking wildly upward ; “ after all the sufferings, the terrors, and sorrow I have undergone ; after all the most unmerited shame that was put upon me ; after enduring all the emotions of love, desertion, and despair, have I met you, but to see you thus—dying perhaps ? ”

That Mary should have accompanied Miss Florence Nightingale—a young lady of good family, whose benevolent occupations fully qualified her for that remarkable and romantic undertaking, which made her and her trained nurses the idols of our soldiers, whose sick-beds they soothed, and whose pains and anxieties they did so much to console—fully explained to Cyril the reason of her sudden and most unexpected appearance in the Hospital of Scutari ; but we leave their subsequent conversation to explain how she escaped the death to which, when last we saw her, she was hastening.

Miss Nightingale and her ladies were as ministering angels in the terrible wards of that hospital ; and to the death-drowsy ear of many a wounded and sinking soldier there, how sweetly came the prayers and words of comfort they uttered in his *native* tongue.

CHAPTER LVIII.

HOW IT CAME TO PASS.

"OH, Cyril," said Mary, in a low and earnest voice, and in her forcible way, after the first emotions excited by their sudden meeting had subsided a little, "I have undergone much that might have made my poor father's bones turn in their grave, by reason of my exceeding misery! Though young in years, I am old in suffering: for in my brief time I *have* endured much."

"My poor Mary!" exclaimed Cyril, gazing with love and admiration on her pale beauty, which in its calm patrician style, consorted ill, or oddly at least, with her plain black stuff dress; "tell me all that has happened since last we met."

"Since last we parted so unhappily, you should say, Cyril."

"My darling, tell me all!"

Then she briefly narrated her story up to that time when in despair, and in an evil moment overcome by shame and terror, she threw herself into the river, and a cry of horror escaped the listener as he struck his hands together; but she had been providentially rescued by a waterman, and conveyed to a London hospital in a raging fever.

Cyril, who had listened to her in sorrow and commiseration, closed his eyes for a moment, and said in a hissing voice, through his clenched teeth—

"Oh, Chesters, there is a terrible account to be closed one day between you and me, and close it *shall*, if lead and powder avail men yet in their wrath and vengeance! The rascally affair of the drugged horse—my beautiful bay hunter; the foul cheating at play; the attempt to disgrace you, my sweet Mary, at home and elsewhere; poor Horace too in the transport—all, all make up a heavy score indeed, to be cleared between Ralph Rooke Chesters and Cyril Wedderburn."

"I was at first ungrateful enough not to thank Heaven for sparing my life," said Mary, "when I slowly recovered and the fever passed away. I was very, very weak, Cyril, and the professional politeness or conventional kindness of the hospital doctors and the hired nurses proved cold, hard, and unsoothing. I longed for the clasp of a friendly hand; for the glance of an affectionate eye; for a shoulder whereon I could lay my poor head and be at rest. Cyril, alas! you were far away—you were no longer mine—and I felt myself lonely—oh, so lonely in the world! I have endured and felt the bitterness of death when I sinfully sought it; but not more bitter than what I endured on losing you."

"Do not heap ashes on my head, I implore you, Mary."

"In that hospital I recovered, yet only wished to die, for it

seemed better, holier, purer, and every way safer to die than and be at peace, than to live and struggle on, friendless and hopeless ; and yet Chesters had artfully said such terrible things of the dead who die in such places, unknown and unclaimed, that my heart shrunk within me. But one day there came a lady, with a comely face and pleasing manner—a lady who seemed to take a great interest in me, who talked to me kindly and consolingly, whom I kissed, and who actually permitted me to press my thin, wan cheek to hers—yes, even to nestle on her breast, while I told her all my hapless story. Then she took a deeper interest in me—a lonely girl without father or mother—and spoke much of the good works one may do in this world.

“Prior to her coming, I had sometimes in my heart rebelliously questioned the justice of God in creating creatures such as I, only for trial and sorrow ; but she taught me that these thoughts were evil, and that I had no right to consider His reasons or purpose for chastening me. Then she spoke of her own mission, and said—“Come and be one of us in the East, where we are going to nurse our poor soldiers. Our hands are weak, but our hearts are strong and true.”

“I immediately agreed to be one of these good Samaritans, and *then* I thought myself at peace with God, the world, and—myself.

“‘I have been so long the nurse of my poor papa,’ said I, ‘that I shall be useful, I trust. I owe God some atonement too, for what I attempted—to rush unbidden into His presence!’

“The desire to devote myself to the cause of suffering humanity became an enthusiasm within me. Existence and its personal interests seemed to have lost all value to poor Mary Lennox. I had learned to feel that out of all grief we may attain to a nobler state of life than that of the world, and as I cherished these emotions, I felt myself growing better, holier, almost sublime, in my longing to do good. I have read that ‘it is well for us to remember that we are only travellers and wayfarers on this earth ;’ but sometimes it seems a little hard to think how few traces of our footsteps we leave behind us when the journey is finished.”

“And these emotions and purposes brought you to this horrible Scutari ? To nurse all kinds of fellows, with all manner of wounds and dreadful diseases incident to camp and field ?”

A little colour came into her face as she replied—

“Yes, Cyril ; and perhaps a lingering desire, or hope, to be nearer you ; for though you had cast me off so cruelly, I felt that you were still—the husband of my heart. I did not desire to meet you because—because—but God has willed it otherwise. It is enough ! I resolved by doing good to consecrate to Heaven

the life I had so wildly, in my despair, attempted to take away."

"My poor Mary! my poor Mary! my own love!" moaned Cyril.

Her voice was grave and sweet; even so was her soft, pale face, as she replied, meekly—

"You have no longer the right to love me, Cyril Wedderburn."

"Mary?"

"Your wealthy cousin——"

"She is engaged to Horace Ramornie!"

"And you never loved her?"

"Never! I have had many a flirtation, Mary, but never loved woman save you!"

"Chesters told me——"

"Chesters again! Curses dog his steps!"

Mary said nothing more, lest she might agitate him, and while her heart began to beat happily, and even some colour mantled in her cheek, she could not but recall that painful interview, when Lady Wedderburn, by her silence, seemed tacitly to admit of his engagement with that terrible and dreaded cousin!

"Oh, my Mary, my own!" said he, while caressing her hand, "such joy it is to hear your voice again—to feel your hand in mine. But your engagement-ring——?"

"Is gone, Cyril. It was taken from me after I was picked up senseless in the water, as I have told you."

"I will soon replace it, darling, by one that shall never be taken off your finger in life or death! I begin almost to believe in magnetic influences—in Mesmerism, and the Odic force."

"Why?"

"For never did the touch of a human hand thrill through me as yours does, dearest Mary. Now, why is this?"

"Because I love you!" she answered, with a beautiful smile.

If it be true that "to people who are in love each casual meeting is a new miracle," in which they fancifully see the finger of fate, or destiny, or the hand of Heaven itself, how bewildering to Cyril Wedderburn was this sudden re-union with Mary Lennox!

"The past is gone for ever," said he, after a happy pause; "let us forget it; but the present is ours yet, Mary, darling—my wee heather lintie," he added, sliding into the idiom of his schoolboy days; "my cushat doo, that has come all the way from the purple Lammermuirs to be my nurse and guide."

"Now you must not speak more, dearest Cyril. Already you have said too much," said Mary, drawing back from his extended arms.

Cyril was becoming flushed and excited, and it was fortunate that the arrival of the staff-surgeon, Dr. Riversdale, caused Mary to withdraw to another ward.

From that day Cyril's progress towards convalescence was marvellous ; and to get chicken broth, arrowroot, calf's-foot jelly, and an occasional glass of wine from Mary's pretty hand, was marvellous too ! Clever, versatile, full of expedients, she made an excellent nurse, and was adored by the soldiers, though they soon discovered that her chief favourites were the wounded of the Royal Fusileers.

Their separation, quarrel, and sorrow ; time, and their singular isolation in that remarkable place, made his love keener, stronger, and more tender than ever. Glory had suddenly become a myth and a sham ! He had fully earned his war medal, if the army was to have such a decoration ; he had acquitted himself as a soldier at the passage of the Alma, as he had already done in India. He had a fair claim for sick leave, prior to selling out, without the hollow pretence of "urgent private affairs ;" and leave he should have, and bring home a bride with him to Willowdean !

And in sketching out this joyous programme, he quite forgot any scheme for the exposure or punishment of Chesters.

Cyril saw it all—that happy future. All doubts cleared away, and Mary's wrongs atoned for, by the devotion of a life to her !

As he grew towards convalescence, however, he saw less and less of Mary. The rules laid down for her guidance as a volunteer nurse, the amenities of society, and proper policy alike required that she should only visit him at stated times, especially after he became well enough to ride about Scutari, to visit Chalcedon (and linger in the beautiful garden and plantain grove of Haider Pacha), remembering he had read in his school-boy days, that Pliny had called it "the City of the Blind : " or to ride up the eastern shore of the Bosphorus as far as Asia, and once by the daily steamer to the Islands of the Princes, to see the tomb of Irene, and other places set forth in his "John Murray."

He was intensely anxious to get well, that he might put his plans in operation and remove Mary from the perilous and, as he thought them, degrading tasks to which she had devoted herself ; and, as a preliminary, he resolved to place her at Misseri's Frankish Hotel in Pera, where several officers' wives with whom he was intimate resided.

But man proposes, and God disposes !

CHAPTER LIX.

THE NIGHT MARCH TO TCHORGOUN.

"THE Royal Fusileers will parade in light marching order, and in their great coats, at twelve o'clock to-night, and march to

the rear of the Defence Works, to join the brigade of Sir Colin Campbell, in his *reconnaissance* of the enemy's lines. Officers commanding companies to see that the men's ammunition is completed to sixty rounds."

Such was the Brigade Order read by Horace on the evening of the 20th February; and he muttered, "Great coats, by Jove! I should think so;" for the atmosphere was bitterly cold, and the unexpected parade was annoying, as he had provided a little supper in his hut; and being popular in the division, to say nothing of the regiment, his guests would be sure to come, each bringing his own knife, fork, and spoon; and to some such social gatherings they had sometimes to add their own "grog and prog;" for before Sebastopol an entertainment was somewhat of a scramble, so far as viands and table appurtenances were concerned—a wretched picnic, with a perpetual shot-and-shell accompaniment.

Horace, with the assistance of the Fusileer, his servant, had contrived to make his hut pretty comfortable, and felt extremely loth to quit it on the night in question.

He had constructed an arm-chair out of an empty flour-cask, by sawing off the half of one side to the middle thereof, and therein he took his repose, and enjoyed a "quiet weed" after the fatigue of the trenches, or having a few hours' shooting behind a sand-bag in the rifle-pits, while Beamish and others who might drop in had to perch themselves on his "overland" or bullock trunks. But to turn out for a night march in the then state of the thermometer, when he expected guests, and was getting his bedfellow heated, was a decided bore—the aforesaid "fellow" being a sixteen-pound shot which he was wont to warm in the fire by which his supper was cooked, and placed thereafter at the foot of his camp bed.

Rearward of his hut the wind was howling up from the valley of Inkerman, where the graves of those slain in the two battles lay under the winter snow; it came into the hut by many a crevice and cranny, together with a cloud of white drift whenever the door was opened, so that his candle end, which was stuck in a horn lantern, was often on the point of extinction.

The swords of Probyn, Bingham, and two other poor fellows who had fallen, were hanging on the wall until Horace could get them transmitted home to sorrowing parents or friends. A few Russian muskets and leather helmets gleaned up from the adjacent field (to be sent as trophies to Willowdean), with a bucket, some black bottles, full or empty, tins of preserved meat, a few cooking utensils, with a truckle camp bed, formed the entire furniture of Horace's abode, which measured some ten or twelve feet each way, and might have passed for the

wigwam of Robinson Crusoe; but to see stray numbers of *Punch*, the *Illustrated News*, and monthly "Army List" would be an anachronism there.

The first who arrived was Everard Home, the Master of Ernescleugh, from the Guards' camp; then came Beamish, young Hunton of the 34th, Ned Elton, limping after his wound received at the Alma, and two Cavalry men; but save their swords and belts, little trace of regimentals (that good old word which is now going out of fashion) could be found upon them. All wore fur-trimmed over-coats of different kinds, caps with ear-covers, and huge warm gloves and mufflers, comfortable knitted things, the offerings of fair friends and tender-hearted Englishwomen, far away at home; and all were thickly coated with snow.

"Welcome, Ponsonby, though the last," cried Horace to one of the Dragoons; "but you can't close the door too quickly."

"True for you," added Beamish; "that intrusive beast Boreas blows the snow in everywhere."

"I wonder what Beau Brummel would have thought of such 'damp strangers' as you?" said Horace, laughing, as they shook the snow from their caps and outer garments.

Alas! now for those who had been particular in their toilettes, who were careful in parting their hair, in the choice of colours for their cravats, and were puppyish in the tint and fitting of their gloves and curve of whisker! In aspect all had become ragged and wolf-eyed, like desperadoes, and were no way ashamed of seeming so, for each made the other's costume a source of jest, and the cleverness with which he patched his own a boast.

Men who had been of the "best style" in London, and should be so again if spared; the Brahmins of Society, the Flower of the Lady's Mile, the pinks of the Household Brigade, now frequently appeared in clouted boots and strange garments of their own stitching. Their dainty straw-coloured or lavender kids had given place to worsted muffatees and mits, cut out of old forage caps, and the waxen heath blossom at their button-hole, like the delicate exotics that accompanied it, were all things of the past.

Handsome fellows who had made many a white bosom flutter and many a beautiful eye grow brighter in Belgravia, and who had hitherto given much of their spare time to the cultivation of their whiskers, and staring through a plate glass of a club-room window, were now reduced to grease their own boots, thankful if they had the grease to do so, and glad to boil their own coffee, thankful if they had the coffee and the fire to boil it; while Sybarites, who whilom had lisped slightly of pale sherry, because it was "corked," condemned mess-room port,

and talked largely of vintage wines, had now to content them with a mouthful of burning raki out of a wooden canteen, or of Jamaica rum, the gift of a casual man-o'-war's-man.

And such were the condition and aspect of those who assembled in the hut of Horace Ramornie on this night of the 20th of February ; but all were lively, laughing, full of pluck, and only sorry that *their* regiments were not detailed to join in the *reconnaissance*.

"A devil of a night to go though !" said Elton. "Are we to be joined by the French ?"

"Yes ; Bosquet and Villenois come with four thousand men," replied Home, the Guardsman.

"And Colin Campbell's force——"

"With your corps, will muster about eighteen hundred bayonets."

"There are some dragoons of the Turkish Contingent going under that fellow Chester," said Hunton.

"A scoundrel who is knave enough to cheat the 'cutest fellow in the Scottish Law List—and that is a strong one," added Horace, aside to him.

His servant had by some means provided an ample supper of ham and eggs, the savoury odour of which filled the hut ; to this was added a little pie of larks, which the Zouaves were in the habit of shooting and offering for sale. When these viands were discussed, cigars with brandy-and-water became the order of the night.

"By Jove ! your cookery does you credit, Ramornie," exclaimed Home, who was seated on an inverted basket, with his plate on his knees. "My fellow is clever in his way too. He made a mess for me yesterday out of a slice from a goat 'found dead,' that Lucullus might have smacked his lips on tasting."

"Had Lucullus been ass enough to come here," grumbled a cavalry officer, "and not *do* 'Banting.'"

"It was quite an Apician meal."

"A truce to your classics, Home," said Horace, "or I shall fancy myself at Sandhurst again ; and, in truth, I'd rather be before Sebastopol."

"You here in the Crimea, Home ?" said a dragoon, suddenly recognising the half-disguised Guardsman.

"By Jove ! I wish I was anywhere else," replied Home ; "we last met at Maidstone, I think ?"

"Are you detailed for the trenches to-night ?"

"Yes ; at twelve o'clock we go to the front."

"I have not seen you, Ponsonby," said Horace, "since the Balaclava day. By the way, how did you feel in the Cavalry charge ?"

"Feel!" exclaimed the dragoon officer, as he tipped the ashes off his cigar, and his eyes sparkled; "I felt as if impelled on, and on, and onward by some new and terrible impulse that amounted to mad exultation—the impulse to ride over, bear down, cut, thrust, and hew, to annihilate man, horse, and everything! Our Colonel led us nobly till we were in the heart of that Russian horde, and then he fell, crying—

"Cut your way back, my lads; go through them again like bricks; they are only Cossacks, mounted on wretched screws!"

"But three of these Cossacks pinned the fallen man to the earth with their lances, for thus he was found by some of Scarlett's Brigade, when the heavies went in for work."

"Any more news of that spy, who has figured so often among us as a Captain of Zouaves?" asked Beamish.

"No; there is a sharp look out kept for him, but he seems to be a very ubiquitous personage."

"It's in luck I am," said Beamish, "having a supper like this, after actually eating a dinner to-day."

"I dined on nothing particular," said Ponsonby.

"But I had a veritable dinner, bedad! and it is not every man who can make that boast before Seblastherpoll, as my servant Barney calls it. By the merest good luck I found a Turk lying dead, and in his havresack a chicken and a bottle of sherry—the forbidden of the Prophet. I have left only the bones of the one and the cork of the other, and did so with regret."

"Had you thoughts of swallowing them too?" lisped Ponsonby, who, though tattered and unshaven, still retained something of his "man-about-town" air.

"What was going on at the left attack last night, Hunton? There was an awful shindy made with those two Lancaster guns in your quarter."

"Can't say, Horace; I was fast asleep—worn out. Never heard it, in fact. Besides, we are so used to the incessant pounding with those heavy cannon."

"Any word of Wedderburn from Scutari?" asked Beamish.

"Getting rapidly well, and going home on sick leave."

"The wounding of him by that Russian was a rascally affair!"

"There goes the warning bugle for our fellows!" said Horace, as the notes of the signal rose and fell on the fitful wind, and he proceeded to invest himself in a thick overcoat. "I must leave you here to finish the night as you like—only please don't burn the hut down. House property is valuable here; and there is one more bottle of brandy in the corner."

"I'll finish what I have here," said Beamish, with a sigh of regret, as he drained a bottle beside him; "for who among us can be sure of coming back again? The drink is uncommonly good. Who's your confiding merchant, Horace?"

"A Sutler at Balaclava—oddivee: he writes it in his accounts. There's the bugle again, the men are falling in."

None would remain behind; all were intent on watching, if possible, the *reconnaissance*, and so all rose to quit the hut together.

"By Jove! Horace, in such an atmosphere as this——"

"What—of frost, Beamish?"

"No, tobacco: it is mighty difficult to find the door of your—bungalow."

"If he doesn't think himself in India again, and the thermometer twenty degrees below the freezing point. Hope you feel warm, Pat! What an imagination you have!"

"But an utterance getting thick and feathery," replied Beamish, who had imbibed more than sufficient of the cognac.

"What *are* you about?" asked Horace, laughing heartily.

"I am searching the wall in vain——"

"For what?"

"That orifice popularly known as a door."

"Here it is, and, by jingo, a soberer with it!" cried Horace as he opened it, and the keen fierce blast of hail and snow came in together. Giving his arm to Beamish, whose steps were unsteady, Horace set out for the muster place.

"Good-bye, Beamish," cried Ponsonby. "Look me up to-morrow, if you escape to-night."

"All right; I'll put Balaclava on my visiting list. Steady, eyes front," hiccuped Beamish, as he floundered on through the blinding drift, clinging tenaciously to Ramornie's arm. "Well, if we don't leave footprints in the sands of time before Sebastopol, we'll leave some in the snow; but, d—n it, don't it look very like madness in a parcel of fellows in red coats going out in the snow to pot a set of other fellows in grey or green coats, when all might be comfortably in bed beside their wives, if they had them."

Horace thought of his cosy sixteen-pound shot, and laughed—some thoughts of Gwenny came into his mind too, as they stumbled on. Gwenny would doubtless be fast asleep then, with her soft cheek on her laced pillow in her pretty room at Willowdean, and dreaming, perhaps, of him, with one of the last batch from "Mudie" lying at hand.

"Are those two stars West Inkerman Lights?"

"There is but *one* light, Pat; and no wonder that we see it so well beyond the river: it is four hundred and two feet high."

"There go the 'whistling dicks!'"

Some cannonading was going on at the right of the French batteries, which were shelling—even in such frightful weather—the earthen works that lay between the South Fort and the Quarantine Bastion; thus, the bombs which in daylight were

discernible like black globes soaring through the air, now seemed like meteors of brilliant fire, as each described an arc to the spot where it was expected to spread destruction and death.

They could hear the church bells of Sebastopol, tolling midnight, as they trod on.

The Fusileers were soon under arms, the battalion "told off," and the march began through the darkness and drift along the left bank of the Tchernaya and beside the aqueduct which had been destroyed by the Allies. The night was intensely gloomy and the snow fell heavily, impeding the progress of the regiment, which, however, successfully joined the force of Sir Colin Campbell on the high open ground which lies two miles and a half westward of Tchorgoun, and then there occurred that which, for a time, appeared to be an indecisive halt.

"One might live to the age of those old fellows who figure in the Pentateuch, and not endure what we do here before Sebastopol!" said Ned Elton, who felt his wounded limb aching in the cold.

"What the deuce is wrong? Why are we halted here?" asked his father, Sir Edward, impatiently, of an aide-de-camp who trotted slowly past in the dark, looking like a white phantom in his coating of snow.

"There's some infernal mistake," was the reply. "The French have not come up, and the Russians are in great force—five thousand men at least—in Kamara, under General Prince Galitzin."

"The French seldom fail us."

"A messenger from General Canrobert to Sir Colin Campbell has stated, that in consequence of the extreme severity of the weather to-night, the regiments he had under arms to take part in the *reconnaissance* have been ordered back to their tents; but the messenger lost his way in the snow. He was too late to inform the fiery old Highlander, who was already on the march, and here we are!"

"And here a few of us are likely to remain, if the halt lasts long," added Sir Edward, for the cold was intense, and many cases of frost-bitten noses and fingers were occurring in the ranks.

Notwithstanding the state of the weather, old Sir Colin was all on fire to have a brush with the enemy under Galitzin; and it happened, as he thought, fortunately, that General Villenois, having learned that his leader's change of plans had been communicated too late, got his Zouaves under arms, and amid the dark and the snowy tempest, had moved down from the heights to join in the expedition.

A cheer from the Rifle Brigade and Royal Fusileers greeted the two dark columns of the French when they were discerned

moving through the gloom ; and after a brief consultation between the Generals, the command "Forward" was given, and the advance began towards Tchorgoun and Kamara at four in the morning, with the Rifles and Highland Light Infantry extended in skirmishing order.

A few cavalry of the Turkish Contingent, under Major Chesters, who had now recovered and joined the army, hovered on the right flank. The river Tchernaya lay on the left.

The orders of Sir Colin were, that not a shot was to be fired, even if they came upon the enemy, as he hoped a body of them might be surprised and quietly attacked by the bayonet ; but the snow-flakes fell so thickly, that the extended files had difficulty in keeping each other in view, and the fingers of the men were so benumbed that very few could fix their bayonets !

In profound silence—for the tread of the marching columns was completely muffled, even as their appearance was hidden by the snow—they proceeded thus, till suddenly there was a half-stifled shout !

Three Russian advanced sentinels had been taken by the skirmishers of the 71st Highlanders, who literally stumbled against them in the obscurity.

"Flash, flash ! bang, ping ! There go the carbines !" cried Beamish, as the Cossack Videttes of the picquet at Kamara began firing at random in the dark ; and then followed the hoarse din of the Russian drums, as their Infantry began to get under arms in the town.

The order was then given to retire, for the *reconnaissance* was a failure, and Sir Colin—by the absence of Bosquet's troops—had no supports to fall back upon in case of being vigorously attacked ; besides, the snow was falling more heavily than ever. "One company could not see its neighbour ; each regiment was hidden from the other, and the regiments were becoming, momentarily, less able to advance." Then the cases of frost-bite were increasing fast, especially among the Highlanders, who had been ordered to take off their warm fur caps and resume their plumed Scottish bonnets.

A few random volleys were exchanged, and then the retrograde movement began with speed. Horace was earnestly wishing himself back in his hut, and surmising that his sleeping partner, the sixteen-pound shot, would be cold enough by that time.

"We can't be back to camp sooner than mid-day now," said Beamish. "We have a horrid road to march by—the road that leads to glory and Sebastopol. Bad cess to both of them ! Have you a drop of anything in your canteen, Horace ?"

Ere Ramornie could reply, the power of speech seemed to pass from him. He received a dreadful blow in the back, and

fell on his face among the snow. The entire regiment seemed to vanish from his sight, and he found himself left alone; for a half-spent shot had struck him in the back, and in the darkness, drift, and confusion, his fall was unseen, as he had been in rear of his company, which was covering the rear of the battalion.

An emotion of despair at the prospect of being left there to perish, made him stagger wildly up; but all trace of Campbell's force, and of the Zouaves of Villenois had disappeared. Nothing was visible around him but whiteness—a sheet of snow beneath his feet, and white flakes falling blindingly aslant on the biting wind that came in fierce gusts from the Black Sea.

To advance was as perilous as to retreat; for he might be staggering towards the enemy, and to remain still was impossible. But his difficulties were soon solved, as he stumbled against a party of Russian soldiers, who were already in possession of a prisoner, a mounted officer.

To these he was fain to surrender himself, and escape being butchered, as he had not power remaining to use his revolver; and he found himself marched off towards Tchorgoun, a prisoner of war, in company with the other who had fallen into their hands in the confusion: and that other proved to be—Major Chesters, of the Turkish Contingent!

CHAPTER LX.

A PRISONER OF WAR.

OUT of the whole army, Chesters was the last man whom Horace Ramornie would have chosen for a partner in misfortune, or in anything; and he marched along by his side, preserving a grave and contemptuous silence. Twice or thrice Chesters, who seemed in no way crestfallen, attempted to open a kind of "chaffing" conversation, by offering bets about their destination, the probable term of their captivity, and so forth. But Horace made not the slightest response. And now, as day dawned and the storm abated, about eight miles distant he could see Sebastopol, with all its tremendous batteries, its green domed churches, and lofty houses, the walls of which were white as the snow that covered all the landscape.

He could see the steamers about Balaclava, and the camps of the Allies; and of these he seemed to take a farewell glance, as he and his escort descended into the valley through which the Black River runs.

An irrepressible emotion of sadness crept over him. When should he see his comrades or be free again? What account of

his fate would be conveyed to Willowdean? Letters had informed him of the grief and consternation there, consequent to the report of Cyril's being "missing" after the Alma; but how would *his* disappearance be accounted for? and what an amount of sorrow it would cause to Gwenny! Ideas of escape occurred to him; but he had been deprived of his sword and revolver, and the six Ruskies who formed the escort, were fellows not likely to stand on trifles with those who were in their hands. They had rifled his pockets, deprived him of watch and rings, and stripped the lace from the collar and cuffs of the faded uniform he wore below his pea-jacket; and Chesters was treated in the same scurvy fashion.

They were all men whose raw-boned figures indicated clumsy strength. Their features were hard, angular, and ugly. Their long great-coats were of mud-colour, with flat metal buttons and scarlet shoulder-straps, and their canvas havresacks contained their coarse tobacco and materials for manufacturing sour-kROUT, while their canteens smelt strongly of raki—the three prime luxuries of their stupid and perilous lives.

One of them, who seemed rather a good-natured man, offered Horace a mouthful from his canteen, and then a piece of black bread, but it looked too like a portion of peat from a bog, and he declined both.

But to be a prisoner almost at the commencement of a war was a galling and oppressive thought to the young man! How long might he remain so, and what might his treatment be? The greatest empires in the world were involved in this mortal contest, and his captivity might last for years—for the natural term of his life perhaps; for at that time strange and dark rumours were afloat in the Allied camps of the French having found in some Tartar castles prisoners who had been gleaned up on the retreat from Moscow, and kept chained as slaves since then. Whether such was the case or not, it is impossible to say now; but the idea of such a doom being his, froze the blood in the veins of Ramornie; and he thought with agony of Gwendoleyne Wedderburn becoming—perhaps when he and his fate were alike forgotten—the bride of another.

A body of Russian cavalry from Kamara was now upon the march rearward, under General Prince Galitzin, as Horace ascertained from a passing officer who spoke French, and behind this force he and his companion in misfortune were marched under a new escort of dirty and unwashed Cossacks, who to make sure of them and save themselves trouble, mounted the captives on two spare Tartar ponies, and tied their hands to the shaggy manes thereof.

These Cossacks were all beetle-browed, ill-favoured looking fellows, with high cheek-bones, piggish-like eyes, and wore fur

caps, in colour and quality closely resembling their own beards. Their uniforms were coarse and quaint, but their arms were bright and good, and each rode with his knees up to his saddle-bow, and so surrounded by forage, bags of Ghiska wheat, and other plunder taken from the poor Tartar peasantry, that little more than the head and crupper of their little horses could be seen. They were doubtless brave and resolute men, for the copper medals stitched on their coarse green uniforms showed that they were Don Cossacks, and had faced alike the rifles of Schamyl's Circassian cavaliers, and the keen sabres of the Khirghee outlaws.

This Cossack force continued riding eastward, and ere long they were at the base of the Tchatr-Dagh, or "mountain of the tents"—a flat hill not unlike the famous Table Mountain, but all of red marble, towering above groves of large trees that were leafless then, and clumps of dark green cypresses, where many a huge eagle, and whole clouds of other wild birds, hovered in mid-air. Here they shot and roasted a few bustards, which were plucked, cooked, and eaten, without being permitted to cool—there was no time for that—and Horace and the obnoxious Chesters came in for a share of the birds; though sooth to say the drumsticks were tough enough to have been used on a drum. With these they had some *yourgourt*, or sour milk and Tartar cakes, taken sans cérémonie by the Cossacks from the house of a neighbouring farmer.

The snow had disappeared now in the changeable climate of the Crimea, having melted so fast that scarcely a trace of it remained even on the bare scalp of the Tchatr-Dagh, or the grotesque-looking Dimirdji Mountain, which towered on the opposite side where the halt had been made, and which was soon to be the scene of a very dark incident.

"Alexis, Ivan," said a smart looking aide-de-camp, in the rich uniform of the Princess Maria Paulovna's Hussars—for that lady was sister to the Empress, and was proprietrix of a regiment of cavalry—"bring those two prisoners before the General, Prince Galitzin."

Then the two weary wretches who escorted Horace and Chesters, and who had just lit their short pipes to enjoy a brief whiff, started simultaneously from that dirty piece of felt on which they were squatted, and which economically serves the Cossack warrior in the triple capacity of bed, tent, and cloak.

We should have mentioned in its place, that it was Chesters who commanded the force of Turks that so disgracefully abandoned the 93rd Highlanders at Balaclava, but not through any fault of his own, as he killed several of the fugitives with his sabre in vain attempts to stay the rest. Left behind sick at Malta by the transport, he and his affair on board that ship had

been forgotten amid the bustle of embarking for the Crimea, and the subsequent passage of the Alma ; so that he had been permitted to join his corps of that peculiar force, the Turkish Contingent, where his story was unknown, or if known, would not be understood, and now he thought that all his gambling scrapes and sharp play had been forgotten, so he was little prepared for what was before him. And now we have to apologize to the reader for an introduction to a very unpleasant personage indeed ; but such introductions are misfortunes which the historian and novelist cannot avoid.

Apart from where more than a thousand Russian heavy cavalry had hobbled their horses, and were cooking, smoking, eating sour kroust and drinking bitter quass or fiery raki, some lounging at length on the still damp grass, with their belts and leather helmets off, for the air was steamy and moist, as the sun had so rapidly melted and exhaled the snow of the preceding night in mist, Prince Galitzin and a few noisy Russian officers were partaking of a hurried repast near the wall of a Tartar vineyard—an erection which, from its massive thickness, age, and height, must have been a remnant of one of the many fortresses erected in the Crimea during the fifth century against the Goths and Huns.

Near it rose several of those green tumuli which are so common over all the Peninsula, and mark the graves of those who had fallen in the ages of classical antiquity—old even as the days of Mithridates.

The Prince occupied a stool beside a kind of table, both of which had been brought from the house of the Tartar farmer, and his brother officers stood or lay on the grass around him, laughing and smoking. Under a loose grey great-coat, which was open, he wore a rich uniform of grass-coloured green, richly laced with gold. His epaulettes were massive, and several medals and orders of the empire were sparkling on his breast. He seemed rather an undersized man, with a handsome face, having dark and sparkling eyes, set indeed unpleasantly near each other ; his nose was hooked, with a somewhat delicate nostril, indicating Tartar blood, and his jet black moustachios were well and fiercely curled up.

He did not rise as the two prisoners approached him, each with proper politeness yielding a salute, in reply to which he simply lifted his cocked hat a few inches ; but ere he replaced it, his face and his shorn black hair recalled at once to the memory of Horace a former acquaintance—the person who had figured as Captain of Zouaves among the British at Varna and elsewhere ; and the fallen officer who so infamously pistolled poor Cyril Wedderburn after performing an act of mercy at the battle of the Alma, where he dragged him from under his dying horse.

In short, the notorious Russian Spy, and Ivan Tegoborski, General Prince Galitzin, were one and the same man !

As there are upwards of three hundred Princes of that distinguished name in Russia, we shall have no fear of "being called out" for mentioning *one* of them here ; but he in question was the poorest among them, having now only his military pay.

The first emotion of Horace was astonishment, and then genuine contempt, that any officer should so far have degraded himself and his epaulettes ; next he thought of the kind, gentle, and manly Cyril Wedderburn, and his heart grew hot with indignation. He involuntarily turned to Chesters, but in the face of that person read considerable alarm and disquietude ; for *he* too had recognised a former acquaintance, who, like De la Fosse, had a gambling grudge to remember.

"So, Messieurs," said the Russian, coolly and with a strange smile, "we three recognise each other, it seems?"

"I am sorry to say that we do," replied Horace Ramornie, haughtily, in French, which he did not speak nearly so well as the Prince ; but, as a traveller remarks, "the Russians have this advantage over other nations—namely, that they are endowed with the gift of tongues, having an extraordinary facility for acquiring and speaking with a pure accent any foreign language ;" yet one who can speak Russian or Chinese may easily achieve anything vocable. "Monsieur le Prince, how about the coffee, the broiled chickens, and cream tarts you were wont to get from your dear mother, in Gascony? Was it honourable to act as you did at Varna, and elsewhere?" asked the young officer, boldly.

There was a triumphant and malicious but cruel glitter in the eyes of Galitzin, as he replied, coolly—"All plans are fair in war and love, my friend. Thanks to me, Alexander Mentschicoff knew to a nicety every bayonet and sabre you had yonder in Bulgaria ; yes, and every cannon too. So now we shall drop *that* subject. You are sorry to recognise me? By the bones of all the Moschti of Russia, and by every shrine in Holy Mother Moscow, *one* here shall be still more sorry at this meeting!" and his eyes flashed like a sword-blade as they turned to Chesters. He then added, to Horace, "What is your name?"

"Horace Ramornie, Captain in her Britannic Majesty's Royal Fusileers."

Galitzin made a note of the name—"Oraz Ramhornoff, Capitan"—in a fashion that would have puzzled Horace's friends had they seen it on his calling cards.

"Your companion's name I know but too well, as Captain Chesters."

"He is Major Chesters, here at least."

"That will matter little by-and-by," was the ominous response.

"What was the object of the sudden night march from Balaclava towards Tchorgoun?"

"To attack you."

"Bah! I thought so; you didn't succeed though."

"The snow——"

"Ah, Nicholas, our glorious Emperor, was right. Holy Russia has two generals who never fail her — January and February! What was the strength of your force? There were Turkish dogs among it, I know—the Asiatics."

"For that very reason I cannot tell. Moreover, I must decline to say more."

"I might compel you," retorted the other.

"Am I to have my parole of honour?"

"That we shall consider elsewhere. Meantime a glass of wine with you."

"Thanks, Monsieur le Prince," and Horace, however repugnant the pretended cordiality, felt himself constrained to clink his glass against that of the Prince and drink with him. After which, the latter said—

"And now, Monsieur Chesters, for you."

"Shall my parole be granted?"

"No!" was the abrupt response.

"What am I to understand by that reply and your peculiar smile, Prince Galitzin?" asked Chesters, uneasily, for his captor was known to be at heart a savage, "but a savage of health and vigour, smoothed and shapened in accordance with the prejudices of civilized life."

"Oui; you smiled when I lost roubles to you by the thousand. I then learned to beware of the smile of such polished villains; but it is my turn to be merry now."

"Why, Monsieur le Prince?"

"Because you are the loser."

"In what way, beyond being a prisoner of war, I have yet to learn," replied Chesters, with ill-assumed hauteur.

"The odd trick is against you, Monsieur."

"I am indifferent about the stakes."

"That we shall see, très bon! Come here, you fellows!" he cried to some soldiers who were loitering near, observantly. "Throw off your accoutrements, and dig me a hole here some six feet long!"

"A hole?" exclaimed Chesters, enquiringly.

"A grave!" replied the hollow-hearted Russian, smiling with his false smile and black glittering eyes.

"Have you no sense of honour?" asked Chesters, growing very, very pale.

"Some of its kind. Quick! deeper and deeper yet! Throw out the earth, you accursed Asiatics!" he added, kicking one of

the soldiers with his jackboot, and bestowing upon him the most opprobrious epithet in Russia, the name of the race which closed his order. "Ah, Monsieur Chesters, you thought that some fine day, sooner or later, you would repent of your misdeeds ; and now you have not time, ah ! ah !"

"Then, have you no compassion ?" urged Horace.

"Bah ! I parted company with that long ago," laughed the other.

"Do you actually mean to assassinate him ?"

"No !"

"What then ?" asked Chesters.

"To punish you."

"Give me pistols, and I shall fight you at twelve paces—ten, if you prefer it !" said Chesters, who gazed at him with a haggard eye.

"I don't fight with cheats or tricksters, and men who use loaded dice, and know the backs of cards quite as well as their fronts, if not better. Tie his hands behind his back, and tie his feet too !"

By this time the sharply ringing brass trumpets had sounded ; the cavalry had all mounted, and formed in quarter-distance column of troops, prior to the resumption of their march ; and it was evident that whatever was about to be *done* would soon be over now.

Chesters was all that was vile and bad, yet he was the son of a gentleman—the scion of a family long honoured in his native Merse. The Crimean air had bronzed his cheek ; time, and still more, dissipation, had whitened his hair. He had done deadly wrongs to the kinsman of Horace, yet the latter looked on the impending scene with horror, and prayed Galitzin, but in vain, to be merciful.

Horace remembered that there was a local story of the prophecy of a half-crazed female gipsy of Yetholm (at whom Chesters, in his mischievous boyhood, had thrown stones), to the effect that he "would never die of a sudden death, nor yet die in his bed ;" and now it flashed upon the mind of Horace ; but to judge by the piteous expression of his face, Chesters put no faith in the prediction, if at that moment he remembered it at all.

A couple of dragoons had unslung their carbines and were in the act of loading, ramming their cartridges home, and returning their steel rods, with a *sang froid* that was more French than Muscovite, when Chesters, who was powerful and athletic, proud and fiery, struggled fiercely with those who sought so ignominiously to bind him. Big bead-like drops of perspiration oozed over the unfortunate man's forehead, his face was deadly pale, his lips a ghastly blue, and his usually light-coloured eyes glared with all the anticipation and the terror of a sudden

merciless, and violent death, which he knew to be inevitable, yet he could not resist the natural desire to shun it as long as possible, for at that moment life seemed dear—oh, so dear ! Yet in his blind despair, he sought aid neither from Heaven nor earth.

Horace called hoarsely, piteously, and then threateningly to Prince Galitzin, who only waved his hand in contemptuous silence, and then the two Cossacks once more seized him, one administering a prod from his lance to quicken his movements, and they again mounted on the Tartar pony, re-tying his hands to the mane thereof. They then forced him away, but, on looking back, he saw a strangely horrible scene.

In his mad terror of death, or in his utter despair, Chesters, with his clenched teeth, had seized fast the coat sleeve—perhaps the arm—of one of those who were binding him. Another dragoon on seeing this clubbed a carbine and dealt him a blow on the head, a blow which, though it inflicted no wound but only a flesh bruise, completely stunned him, and he fell senseless.

"In with him as he is and cover him up," said Galitzin, remorselessly. "Keep your ammunition for others ! Quick—obey me, or it shall be the worse for yourselves !"

The two dragoons who had paused with loaded carbine in hand, now relinquished them, for they knew that Galitzin was not a man to brook delay, or have his temper trifled with ; and taking a couple of Tartar shovels, they proceeded to assist in filling up the grave upon the yet living and breathing man, whom the cold earth so speedily revived that a sense of his situation dawned upon him !

A half-stifled cry of despair, that made the blood of Horace congeal, came out of that hole ; another and another followed, each, however, more faint than the last, as the load of earth grew heavy upon him. Then came a sound like a convulsive groan or snort ; anon it was completely filled, and they batted the heaped up mound with the flat of the shovel. Four feet below that heap writhed the yet living man, bound hand and foot ; and while the *Pulkovnick*, or Colonel of the Russian Dragoons, gave his hoarse words of command to "break into sections" and "march," while the kettle-drums rolled and the trumpets peeled forth a lively and martial air, Horace, as he looked back, thought he could see the mound of earth heaving, as the strong man struggled in his death agony amid the depth of his living grave !

So thus, in some fashion, the prophecy of the revengeful Yetholm gipsy came true after all ; and the onyx ring of Louis De la Fosse, with its heraldic gauntlet on a sword's point, and the motto *Droit en avant*, became the prize of an ignorant Cossack, who tore it with his teeth from the finger of the half-senseless man.

This was all base revenge on the part of Galitzin, as he was a man stained with a thousand crimes and immoralities. So there Ralph Chesters found his grave by the ruin of an old wall of the Gothic days, and amid a lonely clump of caper-trees and juniper-bushes in Crim Tartary!

CHAPTER LXI.

THE PAROLE OF HONOUR.

THE Russian troops in the Crimea were always being changed, with what object it is impossible to say; but those who were once engaged with the Allies seldom saw them again. Thus the Heavy Dragoon force of Prince Galitzin wheeled off towards Simpheropol, *en route* for the Isthmus of Perekop, while he, accompanied by his aide-de-camp and a few Cossacks, proceeded direct to Yaila, carrying with him one of the few trophies lately secured by the Russians—Horace Ramornie.

The repugnance the latter had of his captor was intense, yet he was compelled by policy to dissemble to an extent that made him almost despise himself; for he had to smile and bow his thanks whenever that personage proffered—as he not unfrequently did—his cigar-case, with a bland yet cunning glitter in his eyes. With all his bad points of character—and Horace knew not the half of them—he sorrowed for the sudden and terrible fate of the hapless Chesters, and justly deemed his death, and more than all, the mode of it, an outrage on humanity, on the laws of war and of nations; for whatever their private quarrel may have been, Galitzin should have respected the rights of a prisoner.

But the butchery of our wounded in the Valley of Inkerman, the massacre of a boat's crew under a flag of truce at Hango, and the cannonading of our ships that were perishing amid the terrible storm that swept the shore of the Euxine, go far to prove that the Russians are not particular in their mode of dealing with an enemy, or remarkable for their nice notions of chivalry.

So the close of the second day, after some forty miles march, saw Horace Ramornie a prisoner in the Castle of Yaila. Along the route he had noted every path and defile, every Tartar village, every wall and tree, that might guide him if he succeeded in escaping. That project, if put in execution, had with it many perils; for he might be shot, or shut up among the rank and file and sent inland he knew not where! He writhed under the restraint of the present, and anticipated the future with doubt and dread.

However, once within the gates of Yaila, his parole of honour was accepted by Galitzin, as commandant of the place, to the effect that he should not go more than *one* mile beyond its walls, reporting himself every night at gunfire to the *parooschick* (a lieutenant) of the main-guard ; that he would be made a close prisoner if he failed in these conditions, and eventually shot if he attempted to escape.

Horace was fain to accept of these hard terms, stipulating on the other hand, that his life should be safe, and that he might write to his friends at the camp by a Tartar messenger.

This was peremptorily refused by Galitzin, lest he should in some hidden terms describe the locality of Yaila and strength of the garrison ; for distrust of everything and everybody was a second nature with this impoverished Prince. Moreover he had been more than once a spy himself ; so hence came much of the mystery that involved the disappearance of Horace Ramornie.

When he found himself isolated thus in that sequestered fort, amid the mountains of Crim Tartary, at times a stunned sensation came over him. He felt like one who wanders in the unknown places of dreamland, or under a species of nightmare ! Was he the same Horace Ramornie who had lately so many friends, a position and rank as Captain in the Line—who had been riding between a file of filthy snubnosed Cossack Lancers, in coarse uniforms and mangy-looking fur shoubahs, with his hands tied to the shaggy mane of a stolen Tartar pony ; and was he actually to pine there, under the shadows of the Tchatr-Daghand Dimirdji Mountains, for some unnamed period of time ?

If this was reality, was Gwenny a myth ?

The longing to escape was intense ; but then he had given his parole ; and to ask it back, would be to announce the intention of flight, and cause him to be made a close prisoner, who would be well watched in one of those cells or dungeons of the place, the bare thought of which made him shudder. He could but hope that some body of the Allies might by chance assault Yaila, and effect his rescue ; if the Ruskies did not bayonet him, to prevent him from falling safe into friendly hands ; and *that* he knew they were quite capable of doing.

Rising from the slope of the hill, on rocks of red and white marble, the Castle of Yaila consisted of four towers of very picturesque aspect, connected by an embattled curtain, or wall, before which lay a deep ditch of recent construction ; and, in its time it had witnessed many changes, and had many masters.

The basement was originally part of a citadel erected by the Emperor Justinian against the barbarians. The family of a Khan of the house of Zingis, leader of the Golden Horde, who came from the deserts of Tartary to conquer Russia, had occupied it for several generations. It had been demolished by

the Genoese, when the Superb City was mistress of Lesbos, Cyprus, and "Scio's rocky isle;" and it had been restored, to undergo a cannonading by Mohammed the Second, when he swept her industrious colonies from the shores of the Black Sea.

Now, each of those sorely-patched round towers, was surmounted by a Russian cupola, the copper of which was of a brilliant green colour. Two were shaped and striped like water-melons, and two like pine-apples, being cut into knobby points to make the resemblance more complete. Each terminated in a great cross, and over all, on the mast of a ship brought from the Euxine, waved the white standard of the Empire, charged with the blue saltire of its patron, the Fisherman of Bethsaida.

The garrison (Horace, intent on rescue if he could not escape, took note of everything) consisted of two four-company battalions of Finland Infantry, under the *Pulkownik*, or senior Colonel, Alexis Tegoborski, a kinsman of the Prince—a grim old soldier, who had lost the half of his left hand by a Turkish sabre, at the siege of Varna, and wore a gold medal for the war in Transylvania. As each Russian company is supposed to be two hundred strong, this garrison should have consisted of at least sixteen hundred bayonets; but as Galitzin was one of those good old-fashioned Muscovite officers who peculated whenever he could do so, he had barely two-thirds of that number in his ranks; but when the (obliging) General of the District inspected them, the rest were borrowed from the next officer of the same school at Simpheropol, Kertch, or elsewhere; and the General, pocketing a share of the pay, said nothing about it.

In general vulgarity of appearance, as well as in coarseness of face, it was difficult to distinguish the officers from the men on parade. All wore the same long grey coat, that hid everything, to their gaiters; but under this each had a dark green coatee, faced with red and trimmed with yellow, like their flat, round forage-caps.

Heavy cannon, all painted green, with white crosses on the breech, commanded the approaches to the place on every side, and Horace saw with a sigh, that even if some General of the Allies suggested a sudden expedition of the troops to Yaila, as Campbell did to Tchorgoun, that the Castle would not be taken without a terrible loss of life; yet, he was fond of imagining the joy with which he would see the Red-coats, or the active Zouaves, in their baggy madder breeches, crossing the ditch under grape and musketry, and swarming up the rocky glacis at the bayonet's point. And then his heart would leap within him, only to sink lower in hope than ever. For when was it to be?

Though a Russian Prince, and, consequently, we may suppose,

a gentleman, Galitzin had but vague ideas of the position held in English society by an officer of any rank: and though the superannuated nurse of the Emperor, and even his coachman, have the nominal rank of Colonel—for everything is judged by the standard of the sword and epaulette in Russia—he was disposed to treat the “Hospodeen Ramhornoff,” as he called him, rather coldly, and all the more so when reverses came thick and fast upon the garrison of Sebastopol.

So February passed into April, and wistfully and yearningly did the prisoner gaze upon the blue waters of the Euxine (piquancy being given to that glimpse by the sails and smoke of our war-steamers, cruising between the Straits of Yeni Kale and Sebastopol), “the highroad to Old England,” which lay about two miles from his place of detention. And his soul sickened of the same eternal view. Yet that view was not without its charms.

There were the stupendous peaks of the Dimirdji and Tchatr Dag; the picturesque little Tartar villages with white walls and green roofs; a peep of the wooded valley of the Salghir—the silver rivulets stealing between the slopes of emerald green towards it and the sea. Groups of passing natives; the Asiatic women, with loose trousers and flowing headdresses—the Russian, with high-waisted petticoats; the turbaned and slippered Turk, with a bundle of weapons in his sash; a mounted Tartar, in a red striped jacket with blue trousers and scarlet sash; a Russian Mujik, in jackboots and sheepskin jacket; and troops of all arms, perpetually pouring forward to or from Sebastopol; and high over head the black eagles soaring in the blue sky. But Horace sighed for his little tent in the British camp; for his perilous tour of duty in the trenches; for creeping towards the rifle-pits in rear of a sap-roller; and to hear once more the ding-dong of the great guns, night and day, in and around the beleaguered city!

The greatest terror of Horace was a snowy or, as the season opened, a wet day, for then he was of a necessity confined within the walls. Minus umbrella and wrappers, he could not even enjoy his paroled mile, but was compelled to keep within a dingy whitewashed room, heated by a *peitchka* or wall stove, with a tattered copy of the *Times* or *Galignani* three months old, which somehow found their way there, and from which the censor of the press had carefully obliterated everything of the slightest interest; otherwise he would encounter General Prince Galitzin, who was most exacting of salutes, at every other turn of the old tumbledown Tartar stronghold, every stone of which he loathed.

The weeks were marked only by a bearded Greek priest, who performed service on Sunday in the armoury, clad in white,

with gorgeous vestments of cloth of gold, bordered by the richest lace. Sometimes he had the honour of dining with the Prince, and the pleasure of having his usual meal of beef, black bread, and beer, especially after wrecks in the Black Sea, varied by a repast *à la Russe*, where everything was excellent, from the preliminary kimmel and caviare, to the coffee that closed it. There would be turbot from the Euxine, wild boar from Khutor Mackenzie, potatoes garnished with parsley and butter, salted beef and green *borsch*, plenty of fruit from Achmetchet and *crimskoi* or Crimean wine, and that of the Don, which so often passes for champagne in Russia. Galitzin, to Horace, seemed then a kind of Belshazzar in a green coat and epaulettes, but discontented, and sighing for the beauties of St. Petersburg and the bells of Paris and Baden-Baden. He never asked Horace to play, however, as he knew the industrious Cossacks had stripped him of everything, even to half the buttons on his uniform.

On these occasions, when under the influence of the wine, Galitzin would relax a little of his stiffness, and Horace would strive to forget that he was the guest of a spy and assassin—yea, a double one (for by this time Cyril might be dead at Scutari); and once he begged “that his parole might be extended to two miles;” as he had an intense longing to stand by the shore of the free rolling sea—but dared not hint that.

Galitzin bent his keen dark Tartar eyes inquiringly upon him, and said significantly:—“Are you ill-treated here?”

“Monsieur le Prince, do not misunderstand me; I simply wish to wander out to see——”

“What, Monsieur le Capitain, if the Tchatr Dag, the Trapezus of the Greeks and the Palata Gora of the Russians, together with the mountains of the Yaila, are where they were yesterday?”

“Well, life has come down pretty much to that sort of thing with me. To find that any of them had vanished like the Palace of Aladdin, would cause a new sensation—a surprise at least.”

“An *alerte* from Balaclava would be more acceptable?”

“Decidedly, Monsieur le Prince,” said Horace, smiling.

“You are weary of your imprisonment and of our Tauric scenery.”

“How much I weary, heaven alone knows!”

“Well, empty that bottle of Donskoi; your exchange or release is only a matter of time.”

And Horace thought sadly in his heart—“Patience, patience yet awhile. What is there on the land or sea that is *not* a matter of time?”

How regretfully, yet proudly, he thought of his regiment, the Royal Fusileers—of that splendid group of English officers, who gathered round the farewell mess-table at Chatham—the table

that is at once the model of aristocracy, democracy, and dinner society—men so high-hearted, noble, and generous, of all those who drew their swords that morning beside the Alma ; of Jack Probyn, of old Conyers Singleton whose blighted life was closed by a Russian bullet ; of Pomfret, Bingham, and Joyce, and all who had fallen ; of Sir Edward, Ned Elton, Pat Beamish, and others, who, he hoped, were surviving still. His heart turned to them with affectionate longing. He felt himself so much alone among all those hostile foreigners, with whom he had no community of feeling ; alone with his sorrows, doubts, and harrowing fears of liberty, promotion, and more than all perhaps—a love lost !

The yearning for letters that could never come, and for news of those at home, became keen and poignant. How drearily the round of each day passed ! The utter sameness of place and view and occupation, or rather lack of the latter ; so that each night he thanked heaven that another day of his life had gone, and he was twenty-four hours nearer the end of his captivity.

But the *end*—when might it be ?

Surmises of how the war was going on were incessantly in his mind, with thoughts of Gwenny, of Lady Wedderburn, and of their health, or where they might be, whether at Willowdean or in London, where Gwenny would certainly be the object of so much attention ! Poor girl ! he flattered himself that her sorrow for him would be great indeed—all the greater that she had still perhaps to keep the secret of their engagement in the recesses of her own heart.

And so while he pined thus within the narrow limits defined by his *parole d'honneur*, the soft Crimean spring stole on towards summer, and the soldiers of the garrison were changed many times. Then came the hum of the mountain bee as it floated over the little caper bushes or the purple heather of Yaila ; the splash of the brown scaly fish in the stream that bubbled towards the Salghir or the sea, and these were the only sounds that broke the stillness of the lonely hours Horace spent on slopes outside the fortress (for he loathed the in), while the fertile soil around began to teem with mint and thyme, wild parsley and aromatic herbs ; the great dahlias, sweet-briar, and whitethorn flourished amid the marble rocks and the crumbling walls of the days of Justinian and the Genoese, and every breeze of summer as it swept past was laden with delicious perfumes.

Meanwhile, the Czar Nicholas had died ; the great sortie of the 4th of April had been repulsed ; the rifle-pits had been captured ; the terrible conflict took place in the cemetery ; Sebastopol still held out desperately, but the Russians were hemmed on all hands within it,

Galitzin was a great tyrant. Seldom did a day pass without finding an officer under arrest for some petty fault ; or a soldier mulcted of his miserable pay for the Prince's behoof, flogged, tied neck and heels to a musket, or sent to shot drill ; and these punishments generally took place in the evening, after Galitzin had imbibed his full share of crimskoi ; and after witnessing them, and saying prayers before a gaudy print of his patron, St. Ivan Veliki, he generally retired to smoke a cigar in the apartments of his kinsman, the Pulkovnick Alexis Tegoborski, with whose florid and fair-haired wife, Norina Paulovna, he seemed on remarkably intimate terms.

So thus the spring wore into summer, and Horace Ramornie was still a lonely prisoner, pining in the Castle of Yaila ; but new, strange, and terrible interests were to grow up around him ere he saw the last of its four green-domed towers and heavy gun batteries.

CHAPTER LXII.

THE YACHT.

ON the evening of one of those same summer days which Horace was spending so sadly among the green slopes outside the fortress of Yaila, a beautiful English yacht was seen standing before a fair wind between the European and the Asiatic shores, between the fortress of Karibdsche on its barren rocks, and the lighthouse of Anatali Kawak.

At this place, the narrowest part of the Bosphorus—the waters of “the Sacred Opening”—the waves seemed to be sleeping in golden light. A strong flush of splendour from the sun, then sinking towards the Thracian chain of Hæmus, fell in all its glory on “Olympus high and hoar,” and all the undulations of the Bithynian range ; the purity of the atmosphere, bringing clearly to the eye the shining windows of many a gaily-painted and gilded kiosk, the marble peristyle and leaden dome of many a little mosque ; the pretty villages, the gigantic cypresses, and the beautiful groves of fig trees ; the water being so transparently pure and clear, that nearly all these objects were reflected downward in its glassy depths, exactly as if in a mirror.

The yacht was a smart little schooner of some two hundred tons, straight and low in the water, and coppered to the bends with metal bright as burnished brass. She carried a vast spread of fore-and-aft canvas, which was white as snow ; the masts raked well aft ; the deck was flush, the only enaunbrance being six small brass carronades, for ornament rather than use, though a garland of shot for them was round the coamings of the hatchways.

The elaborately carved figure-head was the effigy of a handsome woman, with flowing tresses, bearing a gilded wand, which was always unshipped when the yacht went to sea; and now the empty hand was pointed as if directly towards the Black Sea. The yards were light, and the spars tapered away aloft like fishing-rods; the union-jack and ensign of the Royal Yacht Club were duly displayed, one at the gaff-peak and the other at the mainmast-head in answer to the crescent and star on the ramparts of Caribdsche.

The tiny companionway, all walnut wood and brass, was like a toy staircase, and the cabin was furnished like a lady's boudoir, save that it was hung with coloured prints of operatic favourites and dancing-girls, in the shortest of skirts, photographs of "some fellows of ours" in the Household Brigade, French crayon heads and studies, some of them slightly objectionable in character—for this was the yacht of the Master of Ernescleugh, and that handsome girl with the fine features so delicately pale and minute, with dark eyes and hair, to whose fashionable costume a piquancy was given by the dark-green Sardinian Bersagliere plume which she wore in her little velvet hat, and who was gazing through her lorgnette alternately at the European and the Asian shore, is Gwendolayne Wedderburn.

Lady Ernescleugh and Lady Wedderburn were below. They had been more than once to the East before, and the Bosphorus was nothing new to them. A heavy gale had been encountered the preceding night in the sea of Marmora, and they were now lying on the luxurious velvet cabin sofas, each fanning herself, bathing her face with Rimmel, in which a handkerchief was dipped, and both eager for the time, when after traversing some three hundred and odd miles of the Black Sea, they should be able to embrace their sons. The yacht did not anchor at Constantinople, as Lady Wedderburn had been given to understand that Cyril had left Scutari for head-quarters.

"Oh, the foolish fellow!" she exclaimed, "to risk himself again, when he might have come home with honour!"

She was anxious that Cyril should see Gwenny as soon as possible; not that the trenches before Sebastopol were quite the place for marrying or giving in marriage, or a Crimean hut the place wherein to spend a honeymoon; but she had begun to have certain jealous fears of secret views entertained by her friend, the fair Ernescleugh, for *her* son, whose extravagance was boundless, and for whom the wealthy Indian heiress would prove a very seasonable match. Once, when she exclaimed in admiration—

"Oh, it is quite a fairy ship this!"

"Were my son to hear you, he would doubtless make you a

present of it," replied Lady Ernescleugh, kissing her cheek. "Would you like to be mistress of it, child?"

"Gwenney!" exclaimed Lady Wedderburn, not knowing very well what to say.

"I am so enchanted with everything, and yonder beautiful shore!"

"If the Sultan heard you, Miss, he'd likely wish to make you mistress of *that* too!" said Bob Newnham, the commander of the yacht, with an air of gallantry.

Many a day at Cowes and Ryde had the Master of Ernescleugh figured on the deck of this yacht with other guardsmen, wearing sou'westers and the roughest of Petersham dreadnoughts, with glazed boots and scarlet neckties, and with shirt collars of marvellous size and pattern, all over ships and anchors, all thinking they "were doing the thing uncommonly well;" and now he was toiling in rags in the trenches, or the occupant of a hut inferior to his dog-kennel at home, while more than one of his brother yachtsmen—poor fellows!—were lying quietly in their graves on Cathcart's Hill, or in the valley of Inkerman.

And now as the yacht bore on, careening gracefully over, when the wind drew more abeam, a breeze which, however gentle, sufficed to make the sea chafe in surf about the Cyanean rocks, Gwenney filled up her time by chatting gaily with Newnham, who, though a soured and somewhat homespun character, could not but be charmed by her beauty and vivacity.

To Gwenney, secluded so long as she had been at Willowdean, this voyage to the East had been a source of uninterrupted joy. Gibraltar with all its batteries, Malta with its churches and streets of stairs, and but lately the Cyclades—Sirpho with its steep mountains, Thermia with its caverns, barren Joura (the Botany Bay of Ancient Rome), Andros with its mountains covered with arbutus, and all the other "Islands of the Blest;" and then came the Dardanelles and Constantinople, her crowning wonder, for she saw only its beauties and knew nothing of its streets of mud.

A joyous and light-hearted girl of eighteen to be transported into a world of such novel sights and sounds, new scenes and tastes, new pleasures and daily excitements—more than all, to be going to behold with her own bright eyes that great beleaguered city, of which all the world was talking, thinking, or writing, where daily and nightly her mysterious—was it possible?—naughty Horace, who had ceased to write to her for so long, was facing danger—all proved a source of thrilling excitement.

Bob Newnham, the commander of the yacht, was as enchanted by her questions as she was bewildered by the utter incomprehensibility of many of his answers, for nautical terms were as

Hebrew to her. He was somewhat tall for a sailor, with a fair but saddened face, in the lines of which disappointment was too evidently written. He was nearer fifty than forty years of age, quite bald, only a lieutenant R.N. yet, and never hoped to be more, even in this time of war. Poor Bob Newnham! He had neither patronage nor interest; ambition was dead within him now, and he was content to be a kind of "upper servant," as he sometimes said in the bitterness of his honest heart; for he thought the skipper of a lord's yacht was only a degree better than his butler or gamekeeper ashore, and not half so comfortable a berth as either had; and he had more than once lost his situation for threatening to "colt," or ropesend, for their aggressive insolence, some of the young sprigs and *parvenus* in whose service he had been since he was last paid off in Hamoaze, after long service in the horrid African squadron, where he had learned too well to know the truth of the sad rhyme,—

"The Bight of Benin,
The Bight of Benin;
But *one* comes out,
When *three* go in."

Newnham was by birth a gentleman; but he had gone early to sea in the rough old sailing-ship times, when steamers were stigmatised as "smoke-jacks;" when the midshipman's berth of Marryat's days was not much improved since those of Tobias Smollett; and he had been more used to tar and slush, than white kids and perfume, or even a white tablecloth, "though," as he often said, "he was obliged to affect all these sort of things now."

Lady Ernescleugh thought his solecisms dreadful, deeming him a creature only to be tolerated because "that absurd boy Everard rather likes him, for they played chess, cards, smoked and made much noisy fun together, when the former chose to be nautical, and have a few miles' voyage in the yacht with a few friends from London;" and the maintenance of the said craft, with her crew of some twenty-two hands, all told, cost a pretty sum annually, when added to the little brigade expenses of the Honourable Everard.

"And those little cannon, they are so beautiful and clean!" continued Gwenny, who was still enchanted with everything.

"We generally give 'em a polish on Sundays, Miss, when the men are idle," replied Newnham, who stood near her with a telescope under one arm and his hands thrust into the pockets of his reefing jacket,—a semi-uniform, as it had gilt buttons and gold lace.

"I think I could fire one myself! Would you permit me?"

"With pleasure."

"But I mean if the Russians attacked us."

Newnham laughed, and while looking down on the bright face and its wonderful long eyelashes, replied, "Thank God that, for your sake, there is no fear of the Russians attacking us, Miss. All their craft are choke full of stones, and lying low enough at the bottom of Sebastopol harbour. We are as safe here as if we were off Blackwall!"

"You would like to fight them though, I suppose?"

A gleam passed over his clear blue eyes, and the colour deepened in his cheek, as he replied, "You talk of practical fighting—I can't get the chance,—but that would be nothing to me. I am one of those luckless dogs, Miss Wedderburn, who in the mighty battle of life have had to fight before the mast, thankful that I could keep my place there, and maintain myself and my poor mother—for she is living yet. But to fight a Russian gunboat, however small," he added, laughing, "and with these toy carronades, would be exactly like scuttling a ship to get rid of the rats—we should lose her anyway."

"And our liberty?"

"Yes, if we did not lose our lives."

"Oh, that would be dreadful!"

"Though there is no fear of that sort of thing; there are some frightful squalls at times in these waters, and my advice to Lady Ernescleugh should be, that as soon as she has landed at Balaclava harbour all the good things we have for her son, the preserved meats, cases of wine and stout, (Rimmel's perfumes)" he added, parenthetically, and with a peculiar smile; "and after she has seen him—that is, if he ain't already under the turf, we should haul up for Constantinople, and wait awhile there, to see what turns up in the Crimea. The infernal work can't last much longer there. We are to have a rough night, I fear."

"Worse than the storm of last night?"

"Storm—bless me, Miss Wedderburn, it was only a capful of wind. We had the mainsail and fore and aft foresail close reefed, to be sure, and the sea made some breaches over the deck, washing a few buckets to leeward, but that was all; she went through it like a duck. Unfortunately we were too near the Isle of Prote, and when it blows I like a good offing and plenty of sea room. We are not in the Mediterranean now, and I believe (even when there) with the old Admiral Doria, that 'its three best harbours are June, July, and Carthage.' It is freshening already, by jingo!" he added suddenly, as the lofty schooner careened over more heavily to leeward; "and I didn't like the look of the sun, as he went down behind the hills, looking yellow and pale at last."

"It is coming much stronger, sir," said the mate, in a low voice, and after a consultation, and much anxious gazing at one

particular quarter of the sky, where to Gwenny's amazement nothing was to be seen; but where, with the true instincts of seamen, they seemed to discern much to excite solicitude.

"House those carronades alongside (we only showed our little teeth as we passed Constantinople, Miss Wedderburn); lower away and lash the gun ports fast, for I see that it will be a night of close-reefed canvas again," said Newnham. And ere long the wind increased so much that sea after sea pooped the yacht, and her commander donned his oilskins, while she rolled fearfully on the long and heavy swell which is so peculiar to that ocean. Gwenny was compelled to go below, and Newnham handed her down just as the light of Faranaki-in-Asia began to glitter like a star across the darkening water, and Mount Hæmus on the opposite shore was sinking faint and blue, while the schooner bore on her course, northeastward, into the lonely Euxine, for not a sail or trace of smoke was visible as gloom and obscurity descended on the sea.

CHAPTER LXIII.

FATE.

CYRIL was still full of his project—his most earnest desire to remove Mary Lennox from the perilous atmosphere of the Hospital at Scutari, and place her in the care of an officer's wife, whom he knew, and who resided in Misseri's Frankish establishment, the Hotel l'Angleterre; if not there, in the *pension* of Madame Giuseppino Vitale, so famous for the views from her windows, though that there *was* an awkwardness in a young unmarried officer procuring quarters for a young unmarried lady, he could not but admit; however, ere he had quite decided what to do, there occurred an event which he had dreaded, yet could not bring his mind to anticipate.

He had recovered with marvellous rapidity, having suffered more from loss of blood than from actual severity of the wounds inflicted by Galitzin, though that near the lung had been certainly dangerous; but what astonished and distressed him for a day or two was that Mary, who had long since ceased to attend or visit him, had entirely disappeared, and his servant, the soldier of the Black Watch, could tell him nothing about her. He could no longer meet with her light figure in its sombre dress, flitting about the passages that led to the wards, crossing the square from the laboratory or soup kitchen, and he began to fear that she had left the place for some reason or purpose known to herself alone.

Could she be ill? Alas! that was likely enough. He re-

membered that since he had first seen her in Scutari, she had been daily growing thinner, even as he waxed in strength and flesh. Her figure, once so fair and round, had seemed to be fading away; her cheeks had become hollow, and her white temples too. Her hands had become painfully attenuated and almost transparent, all bespeaking what some one terms "the lingering decay of the delicate physique."

Cyril Wedderburn was sorely distressed by the recollection and conviction of all this; and, blaming himself for remissness in not having her removed sooner, after three days had elapsed without seeing or hearing of her, he went forth to make inquiries.

"Depend upon it," thought he, "inspired by an emotion of false delicacy, or something of that kind, she has given me the slip and bolted for England perhaps, by the steamer from Galata."

Alas! he little knew that poor Mary had not a sixpence in the world she could call her own.

"I was anxious, of course, to get her out of this horrid place; but I hope she has not anticipated the move by any rash plan of her own," thought he; "but anything is better than being here," he added, for with something akin to terror, he had seen her hovering in the cholera wards, where the patients were in all stages of collapse, with cold extremities, rigid muscles, and faces white or blue; and yet among them she had gone cheerfully, gliding about, with her doses of opium, brandy, soda and calomel; and old Doctor Riversdale, who was now there on duty, affirmed that she was worth any dozen nurses put together.

"It is all very fine, but by Jove, a fellow don't like the girl who is to be his wife doing all that sort of thing among the rank and file," said Cyril to her one day when he expressed his genuine astonishment and grief to find her thus occupied. "It may be enthusiastic, self-sacrificing, and so forth, but it is not the work for an English lady. In the French Sisters of Charity it seems somehow altogether different, but in our Protestant folks I can't understand it."

"Oh, Cyril," she had replied, gently, "we must bear patiently—I at least have learned *that* now—and with proper fortitude and resignation, the ills and the work Fate has marked out for us."

But Mary's frame was ill-suited for such tasks and for such an atmosphere; and now Cyril learned, with horror and dismay, from a passing staff-surgeon, that "the poor girl was down with cholera, and was in that wing where the women's ward lay; have a cigar, old fellow," he added, proffering his case, "and don't go near that place if you can avoid it." The

medical officer said all this quite in an offhand way, little dreaming that he was planting a sword in the heart of his hearer, who hurried away, stunned and overwhelmed, to the place he indicated.

It was a great rambling Turkish house, which had once been the residence of some wealthy merchant of Stamboul. Some Turks were on duty that day about the Hospital, and a stolid-looking Mahommedan soldier, in his scarlet fez, blue jacket and red knickerbockers, stood sentinel under a sunshade, leaning on his musket and smoking a cherrystick chibouque. He started and saluted Cyril, and something expressive of astonishment that a man not a *hakim* should come to visit women, escaped him ; but Cyril pushed him aside and strode in ; for all our notions are reversed in that peculiar land where the ladies wear trousers and the gentlemen often petticoats ; where the ladies ogle through the eyelet-holes of their yashmacs, and the gentlemen look demure and abashed ; where the men wear all the gay colours and women the sombre.

An English soldier's widow who had acted as nurse there since her husband died of his wounds, soon led Cyril to the room where Mary lay—a small apartment that opened off the stately Divan Hanée, having walls painted white and the roof a flaming red, lighted by pointed windows of stained glass ; and in this kiosk (a term signifying a room, or a house indifferently) she was stretched on the floor, the occupant of an hospital straw-pallet and covered by a coarse brown military rug, on which were stamped in tar, the broad arrow and the inevitable letters B.O.

The only furniture in this comfortless room was a *tandour*, the Turkish substitute for a fire-place, being like the *brasero* of the Spaniards, a wooden frame holding a copper vessel full of charcoal, covered by a wadded cloth. She was dashing her head against the wall and the pillow alternately as she rolled about in pain or delirium ; her beautiful silky hair hung all dishevelled over her snowy shoulders, which were quite exposed. Her lips were parched and black, while her face was deadly pale and her eyes unnaturally bright and dilated. Her voice was changed, yet the sound of it thrilled through Cyril to his heart's core. She was raving, and she knew him not.

"God help us—God help us !" moaned Cyril, as he knelt by her side in a passion of tears, and sought caressingly to smooth her tangled tresses and reclose her night-dress which she had rent at the neck.

"Poor young lady," said the soldier's widow, commiseratingly, "she's done a power o' good among our poor fellows ! Is she your sister, Captain Wedderburn ?"

"No."

And in his agony and answer, the woman seemed instinctively to know all; for after a pause she said—"Doctor Riversdale says, sir, it's more fever than cholera, and so there might be hopes if—"

"If what? Oh, speak out."

"If her system wasn't so low—but she can't stand the shock. I saw two children of mine die at Varna—die when the blue cholera mist rose like a tide about the tent-pegs, and I saw my poor Tom die here, after his leg were amputated, and—and," she continued, bursting into tears, "I know a look when I see it in the eye now, and I see it here—so she can't last long, poor thing!"

"How long has she been thus?" asked Cyril, in a choking voice.

"Some hours, sir."

"And before that?"

"She was as calm as a lamb, sir, wishing for a clergyman, and expressing fears that a Captain Wedderburn—you, I suppose, sir—might visit her, and catch the infection."

And this was his Mary—his plighted wife—she whose nature was so full of those charms which are more attractive than the most brilliant or classic beauty—such winning and pretty ways! Oh how, as he knelt by that wretched bedside, and sought to capture and keep the quick small hand that eluded or repelled him, while her eyes sparkled dangerously—through the mists of the past and horror of the present, memory went back to many a happy, happy day, and to episodes all gone for ever now!

She was raving by turns of her father, of her dead brother Harry, of Cyril himself—and his reproachful heart seemed to bleed as he heard her—of little Mrs. Primer, of the Alderman in London, of the prison, and of a host of persons and places whose names bewildered him; then starting into a sitting position she pressed her hands on her temples, threw back her hair, and with eyeballs starting from their sockets, uttered a piercing shriek, as she sprang into an imaginary river, and then lay back calm and still, with her arms by her side as the fancied waters closed over her head.

"Please Captain Wedderburn, do leave us for a little, and when she is a little more composed and sensible, I'll fetch you," and the female nurse half led him out into the Divan Hanée, which is the central hall of every great Turkish house, and off which all the other rooms open. She closed the door—dropped the curtain we should rather say—and Cyril wearily, and as one in a nightmare, seated himself on the divan, or luxurious sofa, which is placed all round this apartment, and there he remained for a time, like a man in a dream—but a dream which, with all its bitterness, did not pass away.

CHAPTER LXIV.

THE CITY OF THE SILENT.

Was it the vision of a distempered brain, he asked of himself, this strange and fantastic Turkish hall (through which the sunlight fell in golden flakes from a double row of upper and lower windows of square form), with all its green and gold arabesques and pious sentences from the koran traced round on scrolls beneath the cornices; was it not like some scene he had witnessed in a theatre, that line of twisted columns and horse-shoe arches dividing the room, beyond which he saw a marble fountain playing, and places like pigeon-holes holding vases and beautiful jars, once filled with cool water, sherbet or flowers? And could it be possible that Mary Lennox—she whom he used to meet in the old pine thicket, whose cheek had so often reposed on his shoulder by the lonely stile in the glen, was lying there on a wretched straw pallet, amid such strange and foreign surroundings, and at the point of—death? So he sat in a kind of stupor, gazing at a group of the Turkish guard seated drowsily under a sunshade, smoking and listening to the lascivious story of a dervish, whom they would reward with a para or two.

Anon the nurse came, and told him in a whisper that “she was asleep;” and he blessed God for it, in the fervent hope that it might be the forerunner of returning health and strength, and that the crisis might be past. So he went forth to soothe his nerves by a stroll and a cigar, and in about two hours returned to find that Mary had been awake, and that a chaplain of the Duke of Cambridge’s division (whom the splinter of a shell had wounded) was with her; that she was quite calm, and preparing and wishing to die.

“But not to leave me!” he exclaimed with sorrowful reproach, and he issued forth again, repassing the Osmanli sentinel, who thought he must be mad to grieve about a woman—“Mashallah! a sick one too!”

In the yard he met Doctor Riversdale, and questioned him; but the old staff surgeon shook his head sorrowfully, and his reply recalled to Cyril the convictions of the nurse.

“There are two expressions in the human face, which when we once see them, Wedderburn, we never forget—the first quick glance of love, and the last long look of death! I have been in love in my day, like most men; and as a soldier have seen many die on the field and in hospital; and I have seen death in that girl’s face, but blended with love too!”

“How, Riversdale?”

“When her lips uttered *your name*.”

After a time, when he re-entered the Divan Hanée, the curtain veiling the door was lifted by the nurse, who beckoned him eagerly, and as he drew near, the woman, with good taste, withdrew, while Cyril, in a fresh burst of anguish, threw himself on his knees by Mary's side, striving, but in vain, to control his grief. She stretched out her thin hands towards him, and gave him a soft sad smile.

Oh, that glance! that too often furtive glance which all lovers know, and which is too subtle for description, has much of power; but it was *not* the glance that was now in the weird and pursuing eyes of Mary,—it was the earnest glance seen only in the eyes of the dying, but blended with much of sweetness. So Riversdale was right.

"I am dying, Cyril," said she, in a low voice; "I feel it in my heart."

"You—you, my Mary; oh, it cannot be!" he whispered with quivering lips and in a passion of tears.

"Yes, Cyril, my love, I can't last long now."

"Oh! would that my wound had been mortal, and that I had died before you, darling; we should then have been reunited, never more to part. But God knows what is best for us."

"And blessed be His holy name, Cyril! Kiss me, darling, while—while I can see you, and can feel my hand in yours. The sun has set very suddenly, surely—on the forehead, darling—on the forehead, not the lip—not the lip!"

"Why, my Mary?"

"There may be death in such a kiss."

"Then welcome be the death!"

"Oh, Cyril!—husband of my heart!" she murmured.

"My plighted wife—my Mary!"

"I am going to my poor papa," she said with childlike simplicity. "He clung, Cyril, to the fragment of his patrimony even as a gallant captain clings to the wreck of his ship, and—"

"Yes, Mary; though rash, a true gentleman to the last."

"And he loved me so—my poor papa!"

Then her mind began to wander a little again. Far away from Scutari, from where the hastily buried dead lay on the plain without the walls,—from the wards of the horrid hospital her thoughts went as in a dream,—for so her mutterings showed while her poor head rested on Cyril's neck,—back to Lone-woodlee, to the old grey tower, with its turrets and cape-house of the stormy Border times; to the mossy stile and the thorn trees; to the old Scottish firs, with their red stems, gnarled branches and bronze-like foliage cutting the clear blue sky; to the mountain burn that brawled amid grey rocks and stones, purple heather and golden broom; from the green slopes of the

Lammermuirs, to the lonely pastoral hills, where the black-faced wedders browsed and bleated ; to places where the scarlet rowan grew, and where the pink and white hawthorn loaded the evening air with fragrance ; and in the girl's heart there waxed strong the desire to die—not among her kindred, for kindred had she *none*, but that she might die in her native land, and be laid among the graves where her forefathers lay, in the Lennox-aisle of the old kirk at Willowdean. But fate had willed it otherwise.

For an hour she lay with her head pillowed on Cyril's heart, and barely conscious of his presence. She was hovering on that Borderland which lies between Time and Eternity—that mysterious frontier from whence the world, and all its interests, must look very small indeed ; smaller still its wrongs and its sorrows ; dim its doubts, its loves, and allurements. After a time a shiver, that passed over all the delicate form ; a sigh that escaped her ; and the fallen jaw, revealing all the pearl-like teeth, announced that all was over !

The light was fading as the sun shed its last red rays on the Bosphorus, but Cyril lingered long with the dead in his arms ; and tenderly, and while his tears fell on them, he kissed her white eyelids after he had closed them for ever, smoothing the long dark lashes on the marble cheeks ; and the widowed nurse, who was hovering without, could not restrain her tears when on peeping in she saw the handsome young officer on his knees, in his blood-stained and tattered uniform, engaged in prayer by the humble pallet whereon the dead girl lay, looking in death purer and lovelier than ever.

* * * *

By the hospital regulations all fever patients were buried immediately, to avoid the spread of infection, and so that night saw the last scene of this tragedy.

Four soldiers—wounded Fusileers of Cyril's company, men selected by himself—bore her on their shoulders in a hastily-made coffin to the cemetery without the walls, where lie so many of our dead, the gallant, and in too many instances, perhaps, forgotten victims of the war and pest. The only pell that covered her was a ship's union-jack ; it had already served for many in Scutari, and would serve for many more ; and Cyril, as he stood at the head of her grave, could see the full round silver moon as it rose up in beauty from the sea of Marmora, throwing far across the plain the shadows of the spectre-like cypresses that overlook the vast Turkish "City of the Silent," the seven miles of tombs ; and after the chaplain had concluded the affecting burial service of the Church of England, not a sound was heard but the splash of oars in the Bosphorus, throwing showers of seeming diamonds upwards, as some light

caïque that shot to and fro ; or the prolonged howling of some houseless dog, the ever accursed of the prophet, prowling along the streets of Scutari.

It was the night of the 20th February ; so the same moon that through a tempest of snow looked down on the capture of Horace Ramornie near the Tchernaya, saw his cousin acting in a very different scene in the great cemetery opposite Seraglio Point. For a time he sat on a tombstone close by, the picture of thought and grief, his hands clasped over the hilt of his sword, which was placed between his knees, and his chin resting on his hands, his eyes bent on vacancy. In the last hour or two he seemed to have become older, thinner, greyer, and more stern.

The chaplain kindly gave him his arm, and his four comrades urged him, in their own plain fashion, to be comforted, though they could not comprehend the cause of his grief ; but then he was a favourite officer, and as they put on their caps and saluted him, ere withdrawing to their quarters in the convalescent portion of the hospital, they all in unison sympathized with Captain Wedderburn.

And there she lay alone in her grave upon the Asian shore, under the shadow of those giant cypresses, poor Mary Lennox, the last of that ilk of the Lonewoodlee. After all her miseries, it was a strange and wayward fate !

How bitterly and unavailingly now he repented of his past harshness, suspicions, and injustice to her who was gone—bitterly too, for the time lost by their needless separation ; for the false position in which she had so long been placed with his family through mistaken ideas of policy ; and he felt in his heart, that surely we suffer our punishments on this earth, and not hereafter.

He had but one embodied thought ever present now—that he had found her in this strange land among Miss Nightingale's good Samaritans ; that he had seen the face, again heard the voice of Mary, and held her hand in his ; and that never, never more would that beloved face turn to his, and never more her voice fall on his ear ! And she had been true to him, and had loved him to the last ! He remembered her warning words of fear and love when he kissed her, and he was not without hope that he might yet die and be laid by her side, for Mary seemed so lonely in her grave ; but Cyril Wedderburn was not one of those men who die easily.

Many a solitary hour he lingered by Mary's grave, as if he felt the influence of her presence about him still, and many a fresh chaplet of white roses he hung there ; for he could not altogether leave the place where she lay alone—so utterly alone ; and times there were when he thought he might have her

remains transmitted home and laid beside those of her father at Willowdean. There seemed a soothing yet sorrowful companionship in sitting there and repeating her name to himself, and looking at the turf which covered the grave, and at the little marble cross which marked where she who on her death-bed had called him "the husband of her heart," was lying at peace with God and man.

Poor Cyril! His life was purposeless now, and more than the half of it seemed to have passed away. His thick brown hair came out in handfuls, and he could detect—yet heeded it not now—a grey hair or two in his beard and moustache. All zest for existence, for exertion, for anything, had gone with Mary Lennox; but, nevertheless, idleness soon became intolerable. He speedily reported himself fit for active service, and Riversdale struck him off the sick list. So the tenth of March saw him on board of a steam transport, filled with enthusiastic and cheering convalescents who had partly recovered from their wounds, all anxious to have "another shy at the Ruskies"—all longing to be once more before Sebastopol, where the ceaseless cannon boomed and the bullets went *ping-ping* from the rifle-pits, where the dead lay half buried on the hill slopes, and where in rags and misery the trench guards toiled.—God alone knows for what now: but when steaming up the Bosphorus, the eyes of Cyril were turned to the point of Scutari and to the diminishing outline of the cypresses that overlook "the City of the Silent," for his heart was lying there. Had Lady Wedderburn known of the catastrophe that imparted such a tone of distraction to the letters of her favourite son, she might have thought, with mingled remorse and satisfaction, that her *wish* would probably be gratified after all.

CHAPTER LXV.

DREAMS REALIZED.

IN Yaila the days and even the nights were passed by Horace Ramornie in a species of mental torture. The longing for freedom took the form of dreams when darkness fell, and visions haunted him like those of one who suffered from fever. He beheld Gwenny at times encompassed by absurd and fantastic perils, from which he sought in vain to save her. Once she appeared clinging to a fragment of loose rock above a raging sea—the cliffs of the Ernescleugh, or Fast Castle, perhaps—and ere he could aid her—for his limbs felt as if powerless, weak, or fettered—the frail thing to which she seemed to cling gave way, and Gwenny disappeared beneath the waves, eliciting

a cry from Horace, which brought the Russian guard in wonder to his room.

On other occasions, he wandered in pursuit of her through endless and mysterious galleries, arched passages, and long, long chambers, where, though he could hear her voice, he lost all trace of her in the end, and sought in vain with terror and bewilderment of heart.

But then he had other and more pleasant dreams. He was free ! He was again with his company of the Fusileers, in the trenches, among wooden gabions and fascines of straw or sand bags, and the booming of the cannon in Sebastopol came to his ear. He saw the white walls and the green spires of the city rising in the sunshine above the curling smoke of the gun batteries. Then would come the music of the band on the march ; again he saw the heights above the Alma glittering with Russian bayonets, and he heard the pleasant voice of Cyril Wedderburn ; there was a sound of pistol shots, and then came the pale face and glittering cold eyes of Prince Galitzin ; or it might be that he had memories of the mess-room of the corps—the billiard table at Chatham or Canterbury, and he was at pool or pyramid with Bingham and Probyn ; and often it was of Willowdean and the days when he came there an orphan from his dead mother's side, and then he saw the stately house with its white peristyle and all its windows glittering in the sun, old Gervase Asloane in his ample waistcoat and black suit hovering about ; his aunt, Lady Wedderburn, bowling through the ample lawn in her smart pony phaeton, or Sir John in tweed suit and leather gaiters going with his gun to the preserves, or rambling about, weeder in hand, and Horace could hear his pleasant voice and see again his bright and benign smile ; but only to waken and find himself—a prisoner still in Yaila ! It was after visions such as these, that by the mere force of contrast, his captivity felt intolerable, and equally so, when, after being lost in thought—indulging in some bright daydream, perhaps—he would be roused by the hoarse Russian drums, beaten for parade or some tour of duty, and, starting, would bethink him how, or why he was here in Yaila.

Though the idea of violating his parole of honour, attempting to escape or to quit his prison without being properly exchanged, never occurred to Horace, the manner of Galitzin offensively showed that *he* was suspicious of something of the kind being attempted. Horace was conscious of being watched ; that eyes were upon him ; and that whenever he went abroad for a solitary ramble, somehow, as if by a singular coincidence, the two Cossacks, Alexis and Ivan—he never knew, nor cared to know their surnames—were always hovering near. But to have spoken of this would have been unwise, and would have excited suspicion.

To a Russian of Tartar descent, subtlety and craft were familiar, even as caprice and tyranny, from the days of his wooden cradle, when he had been taught to thump or kick the image of his patron, Saint Ivan Veliki, and even to thrust it in the fire if he suffered pain from overeating himself with pastillia or other sweetmeats ; if he lost his top or marbles, or got cuffed for his impudent petulance by any of his companions. He suspected that few things in this world were ever done for the motives really assigned to them, and he believed that under all that went on, something *else* was going on unseen. So there was a terrible distrust of everyone and everything pervading his whole existence. He was Muscovite to the heart's core !

One morning Horace was sensible of an unusual commotion in Yaila, after Galitzin's *aide-de-camp*, the Lieutenant of the Princess Maria Paulovna's Hussars, who had been sent to the seashore on some special duty, returned with important tidings for the Prince. The preceding night had been one of dreadful tempest. The rain had fallen in torrents ; and, amid the wild bellowing of the wind, the thunder had been heard, as it rattled in appalling peals over the red marble cliffs of the Tchatr Dag, and the four copper-covered domes of Yaila.

The drums were beaten, and a certain portion of the garrison got under arms after breakfast. Horace felt a thrill of hope in his heart ! Was there about to be an attack—a chance of escape after all, and after those weary, weary months of spring and summer he had endured there ? Day was just breaking, and, in anticipation of some event, which, if it did not set him free, would at least vary the stupid monotony of his existence, Horace came forth, just as Prince Galitzin, after buckling on his sword, was mounting his horse.

The usual strange and malicious glitter came into his eyes, as he seemed to read the hope of Horace in his eager and excited face ; and the latter's emotion seemed to strengthen when he saw the troops bring forth two eighteen-pound guns, and, with their muskets slung, tally on to the drag-ropes, as the field-pieces were without horses.

"By Jove, it did rain and blow last night, Monseigneur le Prince," said Horace, loth to ask any questions, while wishing to invite information. "I have not passed so many sleepless hours since I was in the trenches before Sebastopol, and heard the Lancaster guns pounding away on the right attack."

"And you are longing to be there, again—eh ?"

"I cannot deny that I am, indeed."

"You must be patient, Monsieur le Capitaine."

Horace sighed bitterly, and then ventured to say, "But what is the matter ? Have you had an *alerte*, or are you going to be attacked ?"

"Nay. 'Tis we who are about to attack!"

"What, or who?"

"I know not whether I should reply, but it is no matter. Well, an English ship—a yacht, apparently—is reported to be ashore on the rocks, a few miles northward from Alushta; and we are just going to knock her to pieces with those two eighteen-pounders, if the waves do not anticipate us; for Kaminski, my aide-de-camp, reports that there is a heavy sea on, and that she can't last long now."

"A wreck—an unarmed yacht. To fire on a wreck—is this fair?"

"*Morbleu!* Did I not once before say that all things are fair in war and love? and we are at war just now, I believe. Come on, Tegoborski, we have no time to lose!"

"I dreamed of rats last night, and I thought something would be sure to happen after that, and the wind being so high," grumbled the superstitious old Pulkovnick, as he mounted his horse, while Madame, his wife—in a very becoming *deshabille*, appeared at an open window, where she kissed her large white hand repeatedly to the Prince, who waved his smiling adieux in return.

The hoarse and guttural commands were given, and, at a double-quick, the Infantry—about four hundred in number—left Yaila, dragging the guns and limbers, and having with them several kabitkas, or covered Tartar carts, for plunder, or whatever came ashore.

Some hours elapsed, and Horace felt his heart swelling with indignation. He pictured, in fancy, the shattered ship, the helpless drowning seamen, and the Russian guns firing round-shot—perhaps grape and canister—upon them from the heights; just as they did during the dreadful hurricane in the preceding November, when so many of our ships perished along the iron-bound coast of the Black Sea. Much bitterness was now being imparted to the war on both sides; but chiefly owing to the barbarity of the Russians. Doubtless, there were a few instances of humanity that are worth remembering. Many Russian prisoners who were *paroled* at Lewes, expressed in print, on their return home, their gratitude for the kindness and hospitality they had experienced at English hands; and several of our officers who were prisoners of war in Russia, related the kind treatment they received while there. So, perhaps, Ivan Prince Galitzin was a somewhat exceptional personage.

About noon his cruel expedition returned, and Horace, who had secluded himself in his room, full of disgust and anger, heard the noisy applause with which the soldiers in Yaila received those who came back, though their exploit was far

removed from being a noble or gallant one. The kabitkas were filled with pieces of shattered wreck, sheets of copper, sail-cloth, rigging, several cases of wine, London porter, and casks of beef, which had come ashore ; and now hearing by chance that prisoners had been taken, Horace again came forth to see them, and seek for some intelligence of the outer world, from which he was so completely debarred by the measures and extreme reserve of Galitzin. To be sure he might always have gained some news of the war from Madame Tegoborski, who was not indisposed to view him with favour, as a handsome young man ; but he had a wholesome dread of exciting the jealousy of the Prince in that quarter.

"How many prisoners have you got, Monsieur le Colonel ?" he asked of Tegoborski, who was proceeding leisurely, limping, for he was lame, towards his quarters, anticipating a cup of hot tea after his morning's work.

"One," was the brief reply ; "at least only one of any consequence."

"And the rest ?"

"Are in the sea."

"Drowned ?"

"Or shot, as the case may have been."

In the yard of the fortress, Horace perceived one whom he took to be an Englishman, handcuffed ; he had on only a tattered white shirt and pair of blue cloth trousers ; he was tall and athletic in figure, fair complexion, bald and bare-headed, for in lieu of a cap he had a bloodstained handkerchief round his head, showing that he had been wounded ; and he was seated moodily, and as if lost in thought, on the trail of one of the fatal eighteen pounder field-pieces.

He looked up listlessly as Horace approached, and said—"A prisoner, like myself, I see."

"Not precisely, as I have not the misfortune to be fettered ; but I have been here for four months—ever since Sir Colin Campbell's night march to Tchorgoun. And you ?"

"My ship went ashore in the middle watch last night, on a reef that is not laid down in any of our charts."

"Where ?"

"Within a quarter of a mile from the cliffs that rise near Alushta, a Tartar village on the coast. We had undergone a rough night and were blown far out of course beyond the head-land of Alupka, where Prince Woronzoff's castle stands ; our rudderbands had given way, and we couldn't help ourselves. Finding that the craft wouldn't last long, I lowered the boat and got the ladies ashore, and at the hazard of my own life returned on board ; but I was scarcely on the deck, when, bang, bang, bang from the cliffs came a fire of round shot from these

rascally guns ; so they and the sea, which was a heavy one, soon made an end of the schooner and of my men, for every poor fellow perished, those who threw themselves into the sea to escape the cannonade being killed by the lances of the Cossack beggars, as they struggled half fainting ashore."

"Most rascally—most base !" exclaimed Horace.

"Luckily I had my naval uniform below, and put it on. As I swam ashore the sight of my epaulettes saved me from being butchered like the rest ; but they were torn from my shoulders, and I was handcuffed as you see. I am a lieutenant in Her Britannic Majesty's service ! As a signal of distress I had the union-jack reversed at the gaff-peak ; but I was glad when the spar was knocked away and it fell into the sea. It went to my heart to see the old bunting under fire and never a shot in return. I thought of Nelson, and the signal that flew along the line at Trafalgar ; of old Charlie Napier's in the Baltic, 'Sharpen your cutlasses, lads !' I thought too of many an old shipmate who is lying in the Bight of Benin with a cold shot at his heels, and strong in my breast grew the genuine old English contempt of all these foreign beggars ! But now that I look at you again, I think I have had the pleasure of meeting you before. Are you not Captain Ramornie of the Royal Fusileers—the nephew of Sir John Wedderburn of Willowdean ?"

"The same ; and you ?"

"Lieutenant Robert Newnham, R.N."

"And your ship ?" asked Horace, faintly.

"Was the Master of Ernescleugh's yacht. I have seen you aboard of her at Cowes more than once."

"And the ladies you spoke of ?"

"Were Lady Wedderburn and Lady Ernescleugh ; they *would* come out here after their sons in the Crimea. Lord Cardigan's yacht had come, and the Countess of Errol had accompanied her husband who is in the Rifle Brigade, so the two mammas were determined to come too, and bring no end of comforts and condiments for their 'dear boys' in the trenches ; but by jingo ! they'll rather repent of the expedition now, though they were sent with their maids under escort in a kabitka towards Balaclava ; for the worst of the story is yet to come."

"What could well be worse than that which you have told me ?" exclaimed Horace.

"Another prisoner was brought on with me here, and my heart bleeds for the poor young lady in the hands of those d—d Russians. She is too young for sorrow, and was so kind and affable to all the poor fellows before the mast, they idolized her."

"Of whom are you talking ?" asked Horace, whose heart began to tremble with apprehension and conjecture.

"Who should I mean but Miss Gwendolyne Wedderburn ?"

"She here?"

"Aye, here in this fortress of Yaila—a prisoner like ourselves—but not half so safe in some respects."

"My God!" exclaimed Horace, and he shivered from head to foot; "how came it to pass, Newnham, that she was not also sent to Balaclava?"

"In this fashion, for I was standing by, and to my sorrow and disgust heard every word.

"I am rich, Monseigneur le Prince," said Lady Wedderburn, in the greatest agitation, to the Russian commander, whom I understood to be a Prince Galitzin—but that's a name like Smith in England, they are thick as Mother Cary's chickens in Russia; 'and so is my friend; we can afford to pay a ransom, if it will be taken.'

"And your niece or daughter, which is the young lady?" he asked.

"My niece—Mademoiselle Gwendolayne Wedderburn."

"Wedderburn, Wedderburn," repeated the Russian, 'she is wealthy too; an Indian heiress, I understood.'

"Yes, Monseigneur; but how knew you that?"

"A Monsieur Chesters told me all about it at Balaclava, and of her being the intended of your son; who was wounded or killed at the Alma, I believe.'

"Only wounded, thank Heaven! but do you know Monsieur le Capitaine Chesters?"

"I *did* know him; but, Madame, he is dead and buried now," replied the other, with a grin.

"And now about a ransom?" said Lady Wedderburn, full of anxiety.

"Well, Madame, no ransom can be taken for the young Hospoza; we are Russian troops, not Circassians, Bedouin robbers, or brigands."

"But her liberty?" urged Lady Wedderburn, to whom Miss Gwenny clung in terror and despair.

"Her liberty shall be well cared for. I shall keep her for myself; heiresses are scarce in the Crimea," was the bantering reply.

"Surely you will permit me to accompany her?" urged poor Lady Wedderburn, piteously.

"What the deuce should we do with old women in Yaila? It would only be people to feed unprofitably, and in this nothing-for-nothing world, my dear Madame——"

"Oh, dearest aunt, are we to be separated?" exclaimed Miss Gwenny, in dreadful agitation.

"Instantly, by St. Ivan Veliki!"

"The wretches tore them asunder, though the aunt and niece clung to each other with the death-like clutch of the drowning,

and their cries wrung my heart. The two elder ladies were sent in a Tartar waggon towards Balaclava, in charge of the aide-de-camp Kaminski and four Cossacks, one of whom carried a white handkerchief as a flag of truce on the point of his lance, while we were brought on here. But Heaven help the poor girl, Captain Ramornie. Galitzin sees that she is young and beautiful, and he knows that she is wealthy, for I heard him remark, laughingly, to Kaminski, his aide, 'This war can't last for ever; another winter will see those allies frozen or fought out; then I shall go to England with my wife, turn her rupees into roubles, and spend them in Holy Russia.' Holy Russia be d—d, say I."

Horace listened to all this with the air of one quite stunned by a calamity; and he was again about to address Newnham, when the voice of Galitzin was heard.

"No talking—no communications between you two. Separate them," he added to the *parvoschick* of the main guard; "and as the sailor has declined to give his parole, keep him a close prisoner."

So poor Newnham was led away.

"I was only hearing some details of the—well, I suppose we must call it the shipwreck," said Horace, making a prodigious effort to appear calm and to conceal the agony of his spirit; for the idea of Gwenny being a prisoner in Yaila seemed too fantastic, too unexpected, and too horrible for conviction.

"Ah! we let him put the women ashore; for whatever you may think, we are not quite devoid of gallantry, we Russians; and then we knocked the schooner to pieces," said Galitzin, laughing; "but the chief prize we brought on here."

"I do not understand you," faltered Horace.

"Then understand this. I have caught the rich cousin—the brunette—the little Anglo-Indian millionaire, whose intended I pistoled at the Alma——"

"Cyril Wedderburn?"

"Well, yes, if that *was* his name; I suppose we may speak of him in the past tense now."

"From whom had *you* all this private information?"

"From Monsieur Chesters, *le scelerat*!"

"When?"

"When I met him in the camp of the Turkish Contingent."

"Explain, Monseigneur le Prince?"

"A few days before your silly night march to Tchorgoun, and when I was figuring, as the play-bills say, 'positively for the last time,' as a Captain of Zouaves," replied the unabashed Russian.

"Will not the offer of a bribe set her free?"

"Not twenty bribes!"

"Why, Monseigneur le Prince?"

"You shall hear in good time."

"And where is she now?" asked Horace, with an affectation of carelessness that certainly cost him an effort.

"In the apartments and under the matronage of Madame Tegoborski. She was dreadfully offended when I attempted to give her a little salute *à la Russe*. St. Ivan Veliki—bah! a time shall come when she will think little of my wiry moustache—though it is like a hog's-bristle—being rasped on her damask cheek!"

"By Jove! this is a pleasant situation," thought Horace, as he wiped his brow, and longed to plant his foot upon the neck of Major-General Prince Galitzin, who added with pleasing condescension—

"I shall introduce you to her at old Tegoborski's to-night; but perhaps you don't care about it."

"Thanks, Monseigneur le Prince, I shall come with pleasure," said Horace; and he retired to his room with a heart that was full, nigh to bursting, with sorrow, terror of the present, and apprehension of the future.

That night Newnham was dispatched on foot, escorted by two Cossack Lancers, towards Yekaterinoslav, and a deadly fear came over Horace that unless he dissembled, and he and Gwenny played "their cards" remarkably well, some such distant transmission might await himself, if Galitzin discovered the deep and tender interest they had in each other. And how to conceal it? for the first meeting might, most perilously, reveal all.

"Gwenny here—my Gwenny here in Yaila?" he repeated to himself again and again.

He felt himself trembling from head to foot; a pallor came over him repeatedly, as the blood rushed back upon his heart. Though loving her with all the devotion of which his life and heart were capable, he had no desire, even while longing passionately to see her, to have her with him there, and his voice shook while, clasping his hands, he said fervently—"God protect her—my darling Gwenny. Oh! I fear she will need all His protection here in Yaila!"

CHAPTER LXVI.

TEA WITH MADAME TEGOORSKI.

HORACE naturally wondered how it came to pass that Chesters should have spoken of the Wedderburn family or of their private interests to an utter stranger—a foreigner—a mere chance visitor, such as this pretended Captain of Zouaves in the redoubts before Balaclava; for the visit of Galitzin had been paid to them prior to the assault made by the Russians on the day of the battle there; but it only proved that the enmity of Chesters to Cyril was an ever-rankling subject, and the matter

might have come about *apropos* of the misfortune which befel the latter at the Alma. And then the luckless Major of the Turkish Contingent had failed as yet to recognise in the turbaned Zouave his quondam gambling acquaintance; but the latter knew *him* only too well, and treasured up his secret vengeance. However the matter came to pass, Horace was certain of one thing, that the information of the needy Russian Prince as to Gwenny's fortune was unpleasantly accurate.

His next idea was, as to how he and she were to meet, and how to greet each other—betrothed lovers, who had been so long and so perilously parted—in the presence of Galitzin, after the openly-expressed views of that personage concerning her—views so suddenly and distinctly stated. For Horace knew that the Prince had nothing in the world but his sword, his epaulettes, and a truly Muscovite spirit for the most daring speculation; and he knew also how resolute, how cunning, and how savage he could be when roused. And now, by the contingencies of war, this man was to become the arbiter of their destinies!

Longing, with all a young lover's ardour, to fold Gwenny in his arms, and to cover her sweet face and hands with kisses, he would, nevertheless, be compelled to appear before her as a stranger, and, as such, to be introduced by the Russian ogre, who had them both in his power. It seemed intolerable and absurd, and times there were when Horace was on the point of saying boldly that the lady was his betrothed, his intended, and almost a kinswoman; but then prudence suggested that such a confidence might be unwise, and might, moreover, cause Galitzin to dispatch him, under escort, to Yekaterinoslav, if he did not *dispatch* him out of the world altogether. For Horace could not forget the fate of Ralph Chesters, and knew the refined cruelty of which the Prince was capable.

Gwenny, ere evening came, had got over much of her terror of the shipwreck; but her mind was still brooding with horror over the memory of the cannonade, the mangled and drowning seamen, and the strange manner in which she had been so rudely separated from her aunt and Lady Ernescleugh, and brought she knew not whither. But the Prince had pacified her for a time, by the assurance that when he could get a carriage worthy of conveying her, she should be also sent to Balac-lava. She was full of these things, and in no mood to construe, or attempt to understand Madame Tegoborski, who, as she could not speak English, addressed her in Russian, mingled with a few words of German, seeking to interest her in a certain handsome young "Capitaine Ramhornoff," whom she was so soon to see, and whom Gwenny supposed to be some odious Russian, who ate tallow candles and took his morning libation of train oil.

Horace felt the absolute necessity of losing no time in letting her know the line of conduct they must adopt towards each other, lest she should become inspired by doubt or apprehension of his seeming coldness. On the flyleaf of a Russian book he pencilled a few words in the smallest possible space, simply informing her that under the eyes which were on them there, they must seem to be only *friends*, not what they really were ; and that, on the first opportunity, he should explain all ; and he had barely achieved this tiny billet, when Galitzin appeared to inquire " If he was ready to accompany him and his aide-de-camp, the Lieutenant Kaminski ? "

The Prince was in full uniform, with a pair of splendid epaulettes set very high upon his shoulders in the Russian fashion. He was evidently bent on making an impression, for he wore a gold embroidered waistbelt, and in addition to the order of St. Anne, had that of St. Andrew, an order founded by Peter the Great in 1699, and only bestowed on officers of high military degree. It was a blue enamelled saltire with the Muscovite eagle, and four initials, signifying *Sanctus Andreas, Patronus Russiæ*. Horace had only the poor remains of his red coat, on which none of the lace and few of the buttons remained ; but he knew that to Gwenny's eye " the old red rag that tells of England's glory " would be dearer and more significant than the most splendid costume in the world. However, he felt that he cut but a sorry figure in comparison with Galitzin. He was greatly agitated on entering the whitewashed vaulted chamber, which, in one of the old towers, passed as the drawing-room of Madame Tegoborski ; but though the latter was there, and received Horace with a bland smile, and the Prince with a particularly bright one, Gwenny had not yet left her room, so the visitor glanced uneasily about him, after shaking the hand of the grim Pulkovnick, or *Chef de Bataillon*.

Most of the furniture in the apartment seemed strange to the eye, and extremely nautical in fashion ; for save a piano, taken *sans cérémonie* from the house of an Armenian merchant at Alushta, most of it was the spoil of that hurricane in the Black Sea which strewed the shore with wrecks in the preceding November. Wafered on the wall were two Russian caricatures, which at that time were thought prime jokes. One represented John Bull in his well-known top boots, occupying an island so small that he had not room to turn in it, and which was divided into three parts, entitled " Leinster, Oxford, Cambridge." The other was a grotesque figure of Sir Charles Napier, presenting a fish from the Baltic Sea to the British Parliament, as the spoil of Cronstadt and Bomarsund. An *eikon* or Byzantine Madonna stood in a corner, with metal halo like a gilt horseshoe around

the head ; but now there was a muslin veil drawn discreetly over it, lest it should see old Tegoborski become tipsy, or the Prince saluting Madame, which, we must admit, he was wont to do somewhat oftener than friendship warranted, or platonic affection required.

Madame Norina Paulovna Tegoborski, a stout and very fair woman, with a dazzling neck and bosom, was beautifully dressed in honour of the evening, and wore Schologoleff earrings, each like four tiny cannon-balls, a fashion adopted in honour of an imaginary artillery officer, who with only *four* guns, was alleged by the Russians to have sorely mauled and repulsed the allied fleets at Odessa ! On her large, fair arms were glittering bracelets ; but on this occasion she was fated to display her charms in vain. The room door opened, there was the rustling of a dress, and Horace felt a mist before his eyes and a wild throbbing in his heart, as Gwenny, looking pale and startled, yet somewhat defiant in bearing, entered. The Prince hurried to kiss her hand, and next Madame Tegoborski hastened to present to her the Aide-de-camp Kaminski, and "le Capitaine Ramhornoff."

"Horace !" exclaimed the poor girl in utter bewilderment, "you *here* ?"

"And you, Gwenny ?" He clasped her hands, and—had death menaced them both, to resist the impulse was impossible—for a moment their flushed faces were pressed together, but the hands remained closely locked, while her agitation found relief in a flood of tears.

"The Prince has told me all," said Horace, "and more than I could wish to have heard."

"I certainly expected to see you in the Crimea—and dear Cyril too," said Gwenny, sobbing.

"Alas ! I know nothing of him ; I have been here for more than four months."

"We heard that he had left Scutari and joined the Fusileers again."

"Recovered ?"

"Yes."

"Thank Heaven—poor Cyril."

"What is all this ?—you are old friends, I find !" said the Prince, as Horace drew back (after contriving to slip his billet into the hand of Gwenny and to whisper, "Read at leisure"). "But, I suppose," he added, laughing, and pointing to one of the caricatures, "all the people in your little island know one another, it is so small."

For a traveller writes : "The notion that the great want of England is want of land, is a very popular one in Russia, where land is so plentiful in proportion to the population that no

proprietor thinks of reckoning his fortune by his acres, but by the number of peasants he can put to cultivate them."

And now Horace and Gwenny sat on opposite sides of the room, their eyes and hearts full of each other; but all external emotion was repressed by the consciousness of publicity—the odious presence of strangers.

"And you were taken prisoner, my poor Horace?" said Gwenny, in a tender tone.

"Yes. In the dark amid the snow I fell into the hands of the enemy, in the night expedition to Tchorgoun."

"And hence the mystery of your disappearance and the total cessation of all letters. You know, of course, the catastrophe of last night and this morning?"

"I have heard all from poor Newnham and the Prince," replied Horace, in a sad voice.

Gwenny looked at him earnestly. She could see that captivity, irritation, and the suspicions of Galitzin had done no good to Horace. His eyes, she thought, had lost much of their open, candid, and kind expression; they seemed sunken, furtive, and at times defiant and stern. He looked more manly, however, for campaigning and trench work had developed and hardened his frame; but he was bearded to the eyes, and tattered as a digger at Ballarat.

The figure of Gwenny, he thought, had attained more of the roundness of womanhood; her face was pale and pure as ever, her smile as winning, and her bearing as full of grace.

"Horace—Horace!" she exclaimed, with a touch of her old waggery, "such a coat you have—why, it is in absolute rags!"

"Yes, Gwenny; my kit is not at its best—or my wardrobe, I should have to say, were Aunt Wedderburn here; but the Cossacks took a fancy for the lace and most of the buttons; they appreciate finery, those fellows. But your own attire is rather odd. That dress never came from Swan and Edgar's!"

"It is a yellow silk of Madame Tegoborski's—as you see, a world too wide for me."

Galitzin, who was equally master of English as of French, laughed at these remarks. But now the *samovar*, or brass urn, made its appearance, hissing and hot, and the important business of the evening, tea drinking, commenced.

The four Russians all turned to the *eikon* and crossed themselves, while a servant poured out the tea, and another—a pretty Karaite Jewess, whose white *fercedje* gave additional lustre to her beautiful eyes—handed it round, with cakes and preserved fruit. It was served in crystal tumblers* for the four gentlemen, but in china cups for the two ladies; and the im-

The use of the tumbler is being gradually banished.—"The Russians at Home."

bibing of this fluid is such a passion with the Russians, that in the *Traktirs*, or tea-houses of Moscow and St. Petersburg, visitors have been known to take from twelve to twenty cups at a sitting. Gwenny made more than one wry face over her cup, for in lieu of cream, a slice of lemon was floating in it. Old Pulkovnick Tegoborski added to his tumbler a good jorum of rum, and after having it filled five or six times, hobbled into a corner, where he proceeded to intrench himself behind the columns of the *Moskauer Zeitung*, and was soon enveloped in a cloud from his meerschaum. The Prince sat by the side of Gwenny and sought to draw all her attention to himself, while Madame Tegoborski looked at them vindictively over her tea equipage.

We have mentioned that the Pulkovnick was lame, and we may add that he became so in a very remarkable manner. He was the aide-de-camp whose foot—as M. de Custine relates—the Emperor Nicholas pinned to the floor with the point of his sword, to convince a distinguished foreigner how perfect was the submission of his officers! A serf by birth, he had attained to the fifth *tchinn*, or grade of nobility, with his colonel's commission, through the *oukase* issued by Nicholas in 1842, when serfs were first permitted to make civil contracts and to hold property.

CHAPTER LXVII.

GALITZIN AS A LOVER.

GALITZIN was well educated and knew all the little that existed then of Russian literature; thus he made many an excuse of translating to Gwenny the tender passages which he had marked off in the poems of the Countess Rostopchin (which being secret literature, circulate in *MS.* only) or the verses of Puschkin, who has sung so sweetly of the Fountain of Tears in the palace of the Crimean Khans, or in the story of Voinaroffski, the lover of Aurora of Konigsmark; but she listened vacantly or with ill-disguised impatience, and would irritate him by ever and anon addressing Ramornie.

“And so, dear Horace, you are a captain now?” said she, in the middle of one of Voinaroffski's most passionate appeals.

“Yes, Gwenny; but I got my promotion through the death of the very man who would have been the first to congratulate me on it—yes; to have ordered a fresh cooper of port at the mess to wet the new commission—poor Jack Probyn! But it was no fault of mine; it was the fortune of war; yet I would rather have remained a lieutenant still, and had jolly Jack to make fun with.”

"We shall have peace soon, Mademoiselle," said the Prince, adding the same in Russian to Madame Tegoborski; and Horace shivered, for he knew what idea was associated in the mind of Galitzin with peace.

"But peace always ends in war," said Madame Tegoborski, "just as war must end in peace. What you say reminds me of a passage in Kriloff, the Fabulist, about the friendship of two dogs."

"And what says your Kriloff?" asked Galitzin, knitting his brow.

"It is a fable only."

"Well, go on with your fable."

"Two dogs in a court-yard become affectionate friends; how they fawn and love each other, and will never fight again. It is charming; but suddenly a bone is thrown from a window, and they straightway proceed to tear each other to pieces."

"Yes; and Kriloff has another fable of a sleeping peasant, who is about to be stung by a serpent; but a friendly fly bites him on the nose and awakes him. The shepherd kills the serpent, but he also destroys the fly. A warning to the meddlesome, or the jealous, not to be too officious in *opening the eyes* of any one," added Galitzin with considerable significance of meaning, after which Madame coloured, lapsed again into silence and took up a cigarette, but she had to twist it up for herself that evening.

Monseigneur le Prince was otherwise occupied, he forgot all about the little duty which had been a pleasure yesterday; and now desiring Kaminski to open the piano, he begged Gwenny to favour them with a little music.

With a horrid memory of the events of the morning hovering in her mind Gwenny was about to decline, when a glance from Horace decided her, and she seated herself at the instrument—a very indifferent one, and not at all improved in its recent transmission from Alushta, by Cossacks, on the limber of a brass field-piece. All the music placed before her was Russian, but Gwenny's fingers and ears were clever, and after a few efforts she was able to read off and play in very tolerable style—"The Red Sarafan," (so called from the old Muscovite dress worn by ladies at evening parties), Vielgorski's *Buivala*, and even the "Nightingale," a traditional song and air of the Russian gipsies, to the great enchantment of Galitzin, who was flattering himself what a creditable little wife she would be; and even of old Tegoborski, whose grizzled and closely shorn caput and grim visage (seamed by the edge of more than one Osmanli sabre), appeared approvingly above the columns of the *Zeitung*, as he waved his meerschaum and beat time with his lame foot; but more than all were they pleased when her rapid little fingers dashed over in quick succession all the melodies of the inevitable and inimitable *Trovatore*.

And Horace listened like one in a dream. Was it reality, or was it a madness that had come upon him, that he seemed to be sitting in Crimean Yaila, and under the shadow of Tchatr Dag, listening to Gwenny Wedderburn playing the self-same airs which she had played to him in the early days of their loverhood, and on many a delicious and half-dreamy evening in the beautiful drawing-room at Willowdean.

"I have been tired of my own company," said he in a low voice, as he bent over her, "and have longed—with all the longing of a desperate and a loving heart—to be beside you again, but *not* here. Oh, no, not here; in my wildest imaginings, no such idea or wish could have occurred to me, and yet it has come to pass. Oh! what madness tempted Lady Wedderburn and Lady Ernescleugh to venture here?"

"To see their sons. Besides, Lord Cardigan's yacht, and ever so many more, have come out. And you mentioned having seen the Countess of Errol with her husband in the camp of the Rifles."

"True; but what of that? This barbarous land is no place for delicate English ladies; and I would to heaven that I saw you safe on the watery high road for home."

Much more they rashly succeeded in whispering to each other, for Galitzin was at that moment in conference with Kaminski. How tender and delicious to themselves—but themselves only—are the little nothings that make up the conversation of lovers!

Was it Ennemoser's theory of polarity, or what? But it seemed that in the same mysterious fashion as that on which the learned doctor expatiates, through spirituality, or may it be the force of a strong love, a kind of magnetic current had passed between these two at times, for on comparison they found that they had simultaneously thought of, or dreamt each of the other, and imagined the same things at the same identical moment. It might be all nonsense, or a mistake; but anyway it was a delicious theme to talk about, till the eyes of Galitzin were upon them, and he had begun to feel first piqued, and then jealous of Horace as an *Anglais*; but luckily, he was equally so of the aide-de-camp Kaminski, who having discovered a pair of glazed boots and some kid gloves in a chest that came ashore from the shattered yacht—some of poor Newnham's holiday finery, perhaps—had appeared in them as for special service this evening. Giving the obsequious Kaminski a hint to draw off Horace and engage him in conversation, Galitzin bent over Gwenny's chair.

"Ah, Mademoiselle, your singing enchants me; that *Miserere* was indeed divine!" he whispered, in what he deemed his most seductive tone, as he proceeded to turn over the leaves really

like a well-bred man of the world rather than the savage he was in heart. "But," he added, as the cruel glitter came into his dark eyes, "excuse me—I have begun to dislike your friend."

"Who?" asked Gwenny, impetuously.

"He in the tattered red coat."

"What—poor Horace?" she exclaimed, and then blushed with confusion and irritation.

"Orace—what you mean the Hospodeen Ramhornoff?"

"He is indeed an old *friend*," replied Gwenny, in alarm, for ere this she had read the pencilled note, and could think of no safer term for him.

"Bah! I hate such old, or rather such young friends." Then after a pause, he added with a loftiness that made her smile, "I am the Prince Galitzin, Major-General under the Emperor, Knight of the Imperial Orders, and Colonel of the Tambrov Regiment of Infantry."

She only gave an acquiescent bow; had he been that worthy grocer and self-righteous elder of the kirk who officiated as Baron-Bailie of Willowdean, she could not have seemed less awed. Now Galitzin knew enough of the world, of Europe, of that isle of it named Britain, and of the "snobbery" thereof, to believe that she would be greatly impressed by his announcement, as well as by his stars, medals, and enormous epaulettes; but she had come from a land where Rajahs, Maharajahs, Begums, Nanas, and Princes were thick as leaves in Vallombrosa, and where she had seen them trotting about on white elephants with all their half-naked *suwarri* yelling at their heels, so she "saw nothing in it."

But as the evening wore on, an eventful one in the life of her and Horace, Madame Tegoborski strove, but in vain, to open a flirtation first with him and then, as he was too *triste*, with the staff-officer, Kaminski, and to turn the tables on the heedless Prince. The latter was, however, too fully occupied with Gwenny to perceive this, or to care one jot about it; and certainly, the grim old Pulkovnick, Alexis Tegoborski, appeared to care quite as little; he seemed entirely occupied with the pot-hooks and endless lines of consonants which seemed to make up the letter-press of the *Moskauer Zeitung*; and for the remainder of the evening, Horace discreetly kept apart from Gwenny.

With the views of Galitzin so openly stated and now attempted to be put in force, they felt that to observe a distant reserve to each other was absolutely necessary; for if the gallant commander of the Tambrov Infantry had suspected that his prisoner was a secret—and still more, an accepted—lover, he would have no more compunction for telling off a file of Cos-

sacks to take him into the nearest wood, and there despatch him with their carbines, than for taking an extra glass of kimmel, or spoonful of caviare before saying his prayers at dinner time. However, after that evening Horace was invited no more to tea-drinkings or other entertainments at the apartments of Madame Tegoborski ; not that the latter was to blame there, for the wishes of the Prince came to her through her husband, and they were law, for the Russian wife must not forget the symbolical whip which her husband receives from her father on the bridal day.

Long, long were the watches of the night in which he thought, and thought, and considered of what was to be done, till it seemed as if his brain would turn. Then came sleep, full of nervous starts and dreams, and then came the morning. It was a horror to wake with the first thought that rushed upon him, like a black and overwhelming flood, the knowledge that by an extraordinary turn in the wheel of fortune—a cast of evil destiny—Gwendolayne Wedderburn was in Yaila, at the mercy of that lawless Russian officer, and in the care, custody and apartments, of one whom he had too much reason to deem alike unscrupulous and jealously hateful of her—Madame Tegoborski. Of what vengeance might not such a woman be capable ! And if Gwenny, a helpless being, a stranger and prisoner of war, escaped the bold designs of the Prince, might she not, by poison perhaps, fall a victim to the vengeance of the forgotten mistress ! *Galignani* and the *Times* record such vengeance every day. So what might not occur in the sequestered fort of Yaila ?

CHAPTER LXVIII.

THE PROGRESS HE MADE.

LITTLE knowing the peculiarity of the perils that surrounded her, Gwenny felt tolerably secure in Yaila, chiefly because Horace Ramornie was there, and only once or twice did she reflect on how strange and horrible her isolation and detention would have been had he *not* been there by being a prisoner elsewhere, or with the army before Sebastopol. But Gwenny did not like gloomy thoughts, so she speedily thrust these aside. When safe at home and free it would be something great to talk about, to remember, and to think of—it would be like a leaf from a romance, the fact that they should have *both*, he and she, been together prisoners of war in a Russian fortress. And then the revelation of their engagement (that terrible secret) must eventually come about pleasantly, even to Aunt Wedderburn ; as for good, easy Sir John, Gwenny stood in no awe of him.

She complained to Madame Tegoborski that she saw but little of Captain Ramornie, for repeatedly when he had called at the quarters of the Pulkovnick, the Karaite maiden in the white fereedji, made incomprehensible excuses for not admitting him. Horace knew well why this came about; but Madame, who only half understood the queries of her guest, could only shrug her shoulders and make grimaces in reply. Galitzin, however, stated to her, that it was deemed improper to permit frequent conferences between those who were prisoners in a fortress, on the principle of military expedience. This explanation, though utter nonsense, partially satisfied the girl for a time, and she could only sigh and watch incessantly at the window in the hope of seeing Horace pass through the yard before the barracks.

So never dreaming that danger menaced her, she sometimes took merry bursts of laughter at the abrupt and inflated love-making of Galitzin which he sometimes conducted in French as well as English; but her untimely merriment caused his dark eyes to gleam and his brow to become purple with passion, while bitter and evil thoughts of violence flashed upon his lawless mind. But Gwenny, though she knew it not, had one great safety in the fact that the love of Galitzin was almost destitute of all passion; and provided that he obtained her hand and fortune by an undoubtedly legal marriage, which not even the law of England could break, he cared for little else. Yet it *was* pleasing to him, the conviction that the girl so completely in his power and at the mercy of his passions, was one possessed of beauty, accomplishments, and vivacity.

And poor Horace as he walked about in the gravelled yard or square, under the irritating observation of a long grey-coated Russian sentinel, chafed when he heard Gwenny's voice through the open window as she sang and played in the drawing-room of Madame Tegoborski, for the delectation of Galitzin; and also on other occasions, when he saw the latter mounted to accompany her and her "matron" for a drive in the Tartar pony-carriage of the latter to the village of Alushta, Babugan Yaila, or to Bagtche Serai, from the high road to which the valley of Inkerman, with its perforated cliffs and ruined fortress was visible, with an old Genoese bridge in the foreground; and in the distance, by the aid of a telescope, they could from thence see the green domes of Sebastopol and the white tents of the right flank of the British camp, at which Gwenny would cast many a wistful glance. Ramornie always viewed their departure on these expeditions with something of terror, lest they might not *return*, for he knew not what nefarious plans might be forming in the inscrutable mind of Galitzin, and his best hope lay in the chance of their falling in with and being carried off by some foraging or scouting party of the allied cavalry.

But on one evening after their return from a drive, and when Madame Tegoborski had gone on some mission to a Russian church among the mountains close by, Galitzin found himself alone with Gwenny and hastened to improve the opportunity ; for the old Pulkovnick, shrewdly conceiving himself to be in the way, had taken his forage cap and meerchaum and limped forth to enjoy the latter on the gun-battery which faced the road to the Tchatr Dagh.

"What say you, Mademoiselle," he whispered with a soft smile during a pause in her playing ; "how should you like to become a Princess ?"

"I know not—I never thought of such a thing."

"The dignity would well become your beauty, and you could then be the mistress of peasants who should be to you as slaves—people whose teeth you might even draw, if you could find among them one white enough to replace a lost one of your own."

"A most shocking idea ! I never saw a princess ; but in India I have seen a Begum riding on a snow-white elephant, in a golden howdah, hung with scarlet silk."

"I could not exactly give you all that," said the Prince (and indeed he might have added, "nor anything else ;") "but I can assure you that there is no nobler title in Russia than that of Galitzin."

"Oh, I perceive ; you are pleading for yourself !" said Gwenny, laughing, amid her well-acted surprise.

"Do you not understand the spirit of all I have said to you ?" he asked, gravely.

"I think so."

"How then, this laughter ?" he asked.

"We are here in a horrid old prison, apparently, as in a dull house in the country," said Gwenny, still endeavouring to parry his addresses. "You have paid me certain well-bred attentions, such as every pretty girl expects. You praise my singing, which I know to be tolerable—my playing, too, which I know to be good ; and you seem to like my society, which I am vain enough to conceive must be much more pleasant than that of old Tegoborski, or of Madame his wife, but all this must end."

"How so, and when ?"

"I shall soon be released ; I am a non-combatant," said she, smiling ; "to detain me is simply absurd, and I have powerful friends who will not forget me."

"St. Ivan Veliki ! we shall see what we *shall* see !" said he, through his set teeth.

And Gwenny laughed again with her head waggishly on one side, as she ran her fingers over the ivory keys of the piano.

She knew not what Horace did ; that she was in the hands

of a dissipated and *blasé* wretch, a world-weary reprobate, who had long since done with all human emotions, save avarice, and perhaps a little of lust. He was artful, however, and thought to enlist her vanity in his favour.

"Your life must be dull here?" he resumed.

"Very," said she, sighing.

"I could soon remove you to the wonders of St. Petersburg."

"Thank you—but dull as it is, I should prefer remaining here."

"Why?" asked he, with surprise.

"I am nearer the British before Sebastopol."

"I don't think that will matter much to you now," said he, with a wicked glitter in his eyes; but the expression was unseen by Gwenny, for during this conversation she never turned her face towards him.

"As the wife of a Galitzin you will be equal in rank with the Dolgourukis, the Volhonskis, and the noblest in Russia—even with those who boast of their descent from Rurik of Kiev."

All this did not convey much to Gwenny's ear.

"I am utterly sick of this place and of old Tegoborski; a married officer is never a good boon companion or a jolly comrade. He becomes a man with selfish interests. Ah, if his wife were only like you!"

Gwenny did not understand this wish; but it conveyed a volume. He then proceeded to expatiate on the gaieties to which he pretended he could introduce her, and on the post he could get her in the household of the Empress; on the charms of the opera house at St. Petersburg, where she might hear the national hymn and grand military chorus composed by Lvcoff, who in the latter had always at his disposal forty-eight pieces of artillery, which are discharged by him with the aid of a galvanic wire; he next dwelt on the splendour of the palace of the Czars, with its Granovataya Palata, or reception-room; of the hall of St. George with its alabaster walls; of that of St. Andrew, which seems to have been carved out of rose-coloured marble; of the brilliant entertainments, the promenades *à la Polonaise*, the balls and banquets to which he should introduce her; but Gwenny only smiled wearily, and relinquishing the piano, proceeded to fan herself.

"Think too, Mademoiselle, of the grand field days in the presence of the august Emperor, when you shall see a glittering array of perhaps three hundred thousand men, of all the races composing mighty Russia, the infantry of Muscovy and Poland, the horsemen of the Don and the Dnieper, and from the steppes of Circassia, defiling past the grand stand, where you sit among the ladies of the Imperial Court. Oh, what is all the army of your little island, when compared to a show like that! Then

there are masked balls at the Kremlin in Moscow ; ah, you must see that Kremlin," he added, with something of true enthusiasm, "at the hour of vespers, when, as Mouravieff says, 'to the call of the golden-headed giant, Ivan Veliki, suddenly respond from all sides those bells, the voices of his numberless children, and the sound reverberates through the startled air—the many, silver-voiced sound, formed not out of the tolling alone, but out of thoughts, feelings and words which fall not to the earth.'"

And thus translating rapidly from memory, Galitzin spoke all this as if he actually felt it ; but Gwenny only muttered "barbarians," under her breath, however, and fanned herself more vigorously than ever ; while Galitzin—who in reality was tabooed by his sovereign, and had not the power to have introduced her anywhere, though he sketched so freely castles in the air out of her own fortune—as he looked down on the dazzling whiteness of her slender throat, and the little delicate ears, at each of which a simple jet-drop dangled, thought to himself, "how could I ever, for an instant, have admired the amplitude of Norina Paulovna, with her Schologoleff cannon-balls, and large fat fingers covered with rings ?"

"I shall even try to get you an elephant to ride upon," he resumed. "I suppose you rode one in India?"

Amid her vexations, and they were not small, Gwenny could not help laughing at this offer ; and Galitzin, finding her still in the mood to ridicule him, twisted up his moustachios angrily and left her with a haughty bow. Her child-like entreaties that she might be permitted to write to her aunt, only excited the genuine merriment of the Prince ; but Horace was not without hope that the wretched exploit of pounding the stranded yacht with cannon shot, and the sudden appearance of the two ladies at Balaclava, might have the effect of getting an expedition dispatched, for the purpose of capturing and destroying the somewhat paltry fortress of Yaila.

From thenceforward, all the conversations of Galitzin with Gwenny tended towards St. Petersburg and Moscow the holy. The officers and troops in the Crimea were daily being changed, and he would get his command transferred from thence to one or other of those cities ; and she devoutly hoped he might be successful.

He saw that the hackneyed, "the venerable protestations which lovers from time immemorial have uttered," were useless with her ; yet he felt himself compelled to recur to them. Once, when he held her hand almost forcibly and kissed it, she said to him with quiet energy, "I entreat you to respect me, and be kind to me here, in my unfortunate position, as if I were your younger sister, or your daughter."

"My sister, perhaps," replied Galitzin, making a grimace, as the alternative suggested an unpleasant disparity of years; "I have seen much of life in all its phases; I have felt much, suffered much, and enjoyed much; but never knew till now that a passing glance, a smile, could be so priceless to me—never till I met you. Ah, there are higher prizes in this world than courtly rank or military glory; and how often need I reiterate that I love you! You must marry me, Mademoiselle."

"Remember that there are others whose permission is requisite."

"Others?—whom? where?" asked Galitzin, with genuine surprise.

"At home in Britain."

"Ah, the little cock-boat of an island, where people jostle each other at every step; bah! you may never see it, till we visit it together after this foolish war against Russia is over, and peace proclaimed."

All this was becoming unpleasantly plain, she was to be coerced, perhaps; so she said haughtily "I am weary of all this—obey me, *Monsieur le Prince*, if you please, and leave me."

"I am more used to command than to obey," he replied, while seating himself with perfect deliberation.

"Yes, your serfs, and soldiers, who are little better; but you have no right to command me."

"That we shall see," said he, laughing, for her grand airs amused rather than piqued him.

"Come," said she, giving him her hand, which he kissed tenderly; "do not let us quarrel; I fully believe that at heart you are a gallant soldier, and—"

"One you could love?" he added, with his moustachios close to her ear.

"Nay," she replied shrinking, "my husband—pardon me—must be younger, and have fewer lines—"

"These are Circassian sabre cuts! You will not have me then?"

"On a fortnight's acquaintance? it is impossible."

"Am I to suppose then," he asked, in a low and concentrated tone, "that you love another?"

"Perhaps," said she, with a provoking smile.

"You dare to say this to me?"

"Who are you that dare to question me?"

"Who am I?" he exclaimed, in a loud and imperious voice, while he started to his feet, and Gwenny became dismayed. "Mademoiselle, is this a vaudeville we are acting?"

"Prince," said she, "the conversation is again becoming unpleasant. In accepting the offer with which you honour me, I

should be guilty of dishonesty to you, to myself, and the world at large."

"I don't understand all this. Please to explain?"

"To accept you, I ought to love you."

"Well, I suppose so—if not now, at least by and by," said he, leisurely and playing with the tassels of his sash.

"But what if I love another?"

"Again that hint! Who is this other?"

"I have not said that I do; I merely said *if*."

"Well?"

"Then I could not marry you, and what is more, I *won't*," she added, suddenly losing all patience, and beating the floor with her foot, while her eyes sparkled with resentment. "Set me free from this horrid place; send me to Balaclava to my aunt and friends—send Horace too."

"Oh, the devil! Ramhornoff, eh? Perhaps you prefer the society of this dilettanti young countryman of yours to mine?"

"I have not said so," replied Gwenny, feeling herself on dangerous ground.

"Ah! we shall know each other better by and by."

"With you, Prince, this alleged love is caprice; to me it may be fate—destruction!"

"I know that I am your senior in years—not much though; but when better acquainted you shall find no disparity in our tastes, or temper; and if you entrust me with your future happiness, you shall never have cause to repent of becoming the Princess Galitzin."

"Never but *once*," thought Gwenny.

Again the high-spirited little beauty was exasperated by his confident mode of annoying her; and when Galitzin saw the bright flash of the usually soft dark eye, the quivering of the cherry-like nether lip of her exquisitely cut mouth, and the curve of the proud nostril, he knew that he had nothing to hope from her concession or complaisance. He could win her, but by force or fraud only; and by one or other he was resolved she should be won. She was his prisoner, and he would take time to consider the matter well.

"You are very haughty and coy, Mademoiselle," said he, giving her one of his darkest glances, while he took his flat green foraging cap and jerked his sabre under his arm; "but if I find that your friend—your cousin, or whatever he is—this Captain Ramhornoff, stands in my way, or will not use his persuasive powers for me, I may dispose of him as I did that fellow Chesters, who robbed me in Paris!"

And with these threatening words, which he closed by some tremendous Russian oath, he left her. She remembered Rebecca and the Templar in the castle of Torquilstone, and ever so many

more heroines and melodramatic situations with which the contents of the box that came quarterly from Mudie's to Willowdean had stored her mind ; but she gathered no comfort therefrom, or from the conviction that there are "greater novels in real life than in stories."

They were all perilous scrapes—unpleasant, desperate, and so forth, and in this age of gas, steam, and electricity, absurd and unsuited to the case : yet a spice of her Indian breeding came at times to her mind, and she felt, that if sorely pushed and she had a weapon, Major-General the Prince Galitzin, Colonel of the Tambrov Infantry, &c., might stand a very fair chance of having a hole punched in his skin.

CHAPTER LXIX.

HORACE'S PLEASANT TASK.

SOON after the last interview we have narrated, Galitzin went in search of Horace Ramornie. He had not to seek for him long, as the nearest sentinel pointed to where he lay on the grassy slope of the glacis outside the fortress, listlessly, to all appearance, though sunk in sad and exciting thoughts. However, he started up and, as policy required, saluted courteously the person who now approached him, but whom he loathed with an intensity that words cannot pourtray.

"Still contemplating the road towards Sebastopol, and the sea ?" said Galitzin, with a smiling countenance, and in French. "Ma foi ! you'll not require to make a sketch of it, as it must be graven pretty well in your mind by this time. Will you have a cigar ?" he added, proffering a handsome silver case, which had been found in the pocket of one of our Guards' officers on the field of Inkerman.

Cigars were luxuries of which Horace had long been deprived, and as declining might have savoured of insult or open dislike, he accepted one and lit it at that of the Prince, the two looking into each other's eyes pretty much as we have all seen John Mildmay and Captain Hawkesly do in the latter's "Office in the City."

"So you are anxious to be free, eh ?" said the Prince.

"Why taunt me by a question so tantalizing ?"

"I do not taunt you ; far from it. Well, I don't care if I afford you an opportunity for being so."

"How ?" asked Horace, whose heart, while longing for liberty, revolted at the idea of having it without that of Gwenny Wedderburn also being secured. "I have given my parole, and your Government——"

"Know nothing about you as yet. I have troubled Mentschi-

coff with no reports for some time back. I can make you a close prisoner and yet afford you a chance of escaping. A horse—yes; even a Tartar pony, would soon take you to Balaclava.”

“But what means this sudden change in your views, and where are your fears that I might detail the strength, the defences, and so forth, of Yaila? What am I expected to do in return for this favour?” asked Horace, suspiciously.

“You are right to ask, for, as I always say, it is a nothing for nothing world ours. Well, you may do much for me.”

“Explain, Monseigneur le Prince—pray?”

There was a pause; the usual detestable glitter came into the cold and half-closed eyes of Galitzin, and Horace rightly surmised, that if he were once out of Yaila with the aforesaid Tartar horse, he should find—whatever favour he granted or service he performed—the road beset a few versts from the place, and that then he would be shot down without mercy or despatched as a close prisoner to Yekaterinoslav; for he knew that his present companion was capable of any act of treachery, however dark, or base, or cruel.

“As your friend Chesters would have said——”

“Excuse me; he was no friend of mine,” said Horace.

“Your brother officer then?”

“Nor that either,” replied Ramornie, haughtily. “The unfortunate fellow had only local rank in the Turkish Contingent, and had to quit Her Britannic Majesty’s service for malpractice with cards.”

“Well, your fair friend Mademoiselle Wedderburn and I have had one or two long conversations together, and as Chesters would have said, in his sporting *parlance*, she is a stake I mean to enter for. You understand me?”

“You mean to make her a proposal of marriage?” said Horace, with a smile that in spite of himself was somewhat ghastly.

“Precisely; and I wish you to use your influence—that is, if you possess any, with her, for me. Tell her that if she will marry me without any fuss or absurd resistance, I shall open up to her a life of wealth and brilliance at St. Petersburg or Moscow—she can have her choice—at Baden-Baden, and elsewhere, such as she cannot conceive and could not have in England—that land of fog, of exclusiveness, and insular prejudices, where everything foreign is deemed ridiculous and judged by the standard of Pall-Mall or the Old Bailey—your *Times* and your *Punch*. I know all about it; I have been in London, and was there too long for my own profit.”

He certainly had not been there for the profit of others, as “this interesting foreigner” had been required more than once at Bow Street, and was not forthcoming.

"Have you not already proposed?" asked Horace, quietly tipping the ashes off his cigar.

"Yes; but she can't make up her mind. It will after all be, at best, a poor style of ingrafting, as the gardeners say; yet the blood of the Tegoborskis may be perpetuated through my pretty one for all that."

Ramornie made a violent effort to control his rising rage, an exhibition of which would have been useless, and only serving to spoil all, so he said, simply—"You are unfortunately older than the lady, Monseigneur le Prince."

"Yes—perhaps—somewhat."

"Old enough indeed to be——"

"Don't say, her father—that would sound unpleasant. I know that with a disparity of some twenty years between us, I shall have all the ordinary commonplaces of well-bred life said of me on *that* score, and perhaps to me, for the girl seems wonderfully cool and self-possessed. She will talk to you, no doubt, of the brevity of our acquaintance, our partial ignorance of each other's tastes and dispositions—perhaps also ask whether I have not already a Princess elsewhere," he continued, with his ugly smile. "Seek to explain all this away, and to assure her that, save with me, she has no hope of ever returning to England. But though there be a difference in our years, as I am a Russian Prince, it is not necessary that I should sue for this girl in a tone of humility."

"I do not quite comprehend all this," said Horace, bewildered by stifled rage.

"Well, I mean that my renewed offer is not to be blended with an apology—by you at least."

"Have you no humane or religious scruples in this matter?" asked the other, scarcely knowing what to say.

"Oh, as to religion," replied Galitzin, laughing heartily, "you don't think surely that I am particular to a shade about the tenets of the *raskolniki*," for so dissenters from the Russian Greek Church are named.

"But she, I hope, has some scruples."

"She has told you so?—perhaps you are more in her confidence than I am?" said Galitzin, with flashing eyes, for his suspicions were ever prompt to kindle.

"If I am *less*, why seek my aid or influence? Besides, you forget, Prince Galitzin, that we are almost cousins;" and as Horace spoke, he remembered again how Lady Wedderburn used to resent the term or idea; but there it proved most useful, for his hearer felt and knew from a Russian point of view that ties of blood barred both love and marriage within the fourth degree; and so his suspicion lulled again, and he said—

"Monsieur le Capitaine, let us seek to understand each other."

"You are sure you love her?" asked Horace in desperation, to gain time and to think.

"I always dreaded a regular love fit as I dread the evil-eye of the devil; but how could any man escape with her, she is so perilously handsome? She has a lovely hand, and an irreproachable foot and ankle. What a ravishing peep I had of them yesterday as she stepped out of the pony phaeton. Say to her, that I implore her to come to terms for her own sake, as she is perhaps far from safe where she is."

"Terms—safe," stammered Horace.

"I have put her in Norina's charge—under Madame Tegoborski's care, I should say. Now, Madame has been absurd enough to conceive a mad fancy for me. Of course, I am a Prince and Major-General, while Tegoborski is only a Pulkovnick, and has been a serf (though a relation of mine), who joined the army with one half his head shaved, for so we always mark our recruits to prevent them from running away. But she threatens me——"

"Who—Madame?"

"Yes," said Galitzin, lowering his voice, and glancing furtively about, as if he feared being overheard, "she threatens me, and might, for all I know, poison the poor girl; women are terribly vindictive, and that would never do, with such a fine fortune as she has. Will you expatiate on all these dangers as an old friend? and if your advice weighs well with her, you shall have a horse for Balaclava to-morrow."

"But if it does not weigh with her? For I may fail as an adviser, if you as a lover have failed already."

"Then I shall try other means, I shall take her away with me alone to Bagtche Serai or elsewhere for a few days, and that will compromise her honour in her own eyes and those of the world, if the world cares about the matter. She will then see the absolute necessity of a marriage with me. Beautiful as she is, I may frankly tell you that it is not her person I value so much as her purse. I have rank, but I must have roubles as well. I want money, and this war will soon be over now; yet in my time I have drunk and gambled away serfs enough to feed the population of a moderate city."

"But even this last scheme may fail; and what will you do then?"

"Resort to *force*!" hissed the other through his teeth; and thinking that to say more might lessen the strength of his instructions, which did not seem very clear to Horace Ramornie, he lifted his forage cap, bowed, and withdrew, leaving his listener rooted to the spot in a storm of indignation, rage, and natural fear, though not for himself.

"Scoundrel!—open and confessed as such!" muttered Horace,

as he watched the figure of Galitzin disappear through the arched gate of the fort ; "you little know your man, or the task you have set him ! Anyway, I will have an interview with my beloved Gwenny, and may concert something with her. But what can that something be ? Have I not thought of all, in vain, before ? Oh, God aid us !" he added, looking upward with clasped hands.

It was dreadful to contemplate the idea, or rather the fact of his idolized and highly-bred Gwenny being in the hands of a man who could conceive such schemes, and canvass them openly ! In the course of a few minutes, what had he not hinted, suggested, or threatened ; and now there was a new terror, in the jealousy of Madame Tegoborski ! He threw himself on the cool grass, to think ; but how often had he thought in vain before ! And there he lay scheming—considering this doubt and that probability, this plot and that plan, till his brain grew giddy with intense perplexity. The Russians he knew to be corrupt and ready to take bribes ; but he was not the master of a copper kopec. And in yonder Tartar village there was no one whom he could intrust with a message to Balaclava, or whose aid he could seek. He looked wistfully at its flat-roofed cottages, almost buried among the green leaves and golden apples of luxuriant fruit-trees. He turned to the fertile valley that led towards the Black Sea, which blended with the sky in sunny haze, and then to the dark pine forest, that clothed the southern slope of the Tchatr Dagh, the marble cliffs of which seemed to vibrate in the rays of light. But no shelter for her could be found there. Did his parole bind him still, at a conjuncture so terrible ? He feared that it did. He felt powerless, and weaker by having Gwenny's fate linked there with his own ; and he envied now the stupid and monotonous existence he had enjoyed before her peril, and anxiety for her safety came to torture and agitate his mind. Great was the horror of sitting there helplessly unarmed, penniless, and powerless ; and not knowing what an hour—yea, a minute, might bring forth ! Anyway he would see Gwenny at once ; and, with a prayer for inspiration and guidance in his heart and on his lips, he passed the *tête du pont* and entered the fortress.

CHAPTER LXX.

GWENNY'S PLAN.

IF, even to save Gwenny Wedderburn, he broke his parole of honour and escaped, he knew that he should inevitably forfeit, at home, his position as an officer and gentleman for ever. If

he withdrew it, that would be simply a warning to Galitzin that he meant flight, if he could achieve it; and to preclude that, he should be made a close prisoner, helpless to assist her, and probably sent away to the rear, like poor Newnham, who, exasperated by the brutality of his capture, had declined to give his parole at all in any way. It was, every way, a horrible dilemma! Could he by any means communicate with the officer commanding the nearest allied forces or outpost? He had by this time, however, ascertained that the Russian troops in Tchorgoun—that place which had proved so fatal to his destiny—the nearest point to Yaila, were very insignificant in number, though their position was strong, and connected with that held by their army along the whole line of heights between the Tchernaya and the Belbek. He inquired for the Hospoza (*i.e.*, Madame) Tegoborski, of the pretty Karaite Jewess, who had, doubtless, received her full instructions beforehand, as she at once ushered him into the bare and chilly chamber which we have already described as the “drawing-room” of the Pulkovnick’s lady, to which some additional ornaments had been added, in the shape of gildings washed up by the sea from the Ernescleugh yacht; and there Gwenny was seated alone, busy with some needlework, which she tossed aside, and hastened to receive him with a bright and tender smile. They were alone, and were instantly hand in hand! Ramornie could perceive with concern, that since he had last seen her, there was a change in her face, the result, doubtless, of the “worry” occasioned her by the absurd and obtrusive attentions of Galitzin and her separation from himself, when they had so much to say, so much to ask and to tell each other. She had become thinner; her large, dark, and finely-lidded eyes—usually so full of brilliant expression and emotional changes—looked dull and weary, till they caught some vivacity from his.

“Oh, Horace darling, how have you been enabled to visit me? I feared they were about to keep us for ever apart, those horrid people! Do they fear our conspiring, or what? Four whole days, Horace, and I have not even seen you!” she exclaimed.

“I have come at the suit of a lover of yours,” said Ramornie, with a smile on his lip, but a stern expression in his eyes.

“Who? that odious Galitzin?” asked Gwenny, laughing.

“The same, darling. But this is no laughing matter for us—for you especially. I dare not tell you all that man has ventured to hint, and commissioned me to say.”

“Well, I don’t want to hear it. Pet Horace, sit beside me here, and talk to me; we shall speak of each other and not of him—the Russian toad!” and drawing closer to her lover, she nestled her sweet face in his neck; and yielding to the charm

of the situation, they forgot all about Galitzin, and sat dreaming in silence, or talking of Willowdean and the Lammermuirs, of St. Abb's Head, and the wild sea shore, of scenes and places far away, of past times, their earlier emotions as they stole into their hearts, and of much more on which their *listener*—for they had one—could not enter.

"And Galitzin has been making you proposals?" said Horace, suddenly coming back to their present predicament.

"Yes, frequently; ridiculous, is it not?"

"And how do you receive them?"

"I laugh; but there are times when I become angry. He is an absurd old creature; I loathe the sight of him, with his strange cruel smile, and sincerely hope that he won't come here to pester me with any more of his solemn, hard and deliberate love making, that has not one atom of softness or tenderness in it."

"Could I get pistols and an opportunity, I should blow the brains out of this middle-aged Russian cupid!" said Ramornie, in a low voice of concentrated passion.

"Oh fie, Horace; he cannot mean anything serious," said Gwenny, her eyes dilating with surprise at his quiet vehemence.

"Ah, my love, you know not the man or all he is capable of; unfortunately, I do. My letters informed you how infamously poor Cyril suffered at the hands of a Russian officer whom he was succouring, when we stormed the heights of the Alma."

"Yes."

"Well, that Russian officer, so wantonly ready with his pistol; the notorious spy so often found in our camp at Varna, and even in the trenches at Sebastopol—he who could so well act the part of a Frenchman, is Ivan Tegoborski, the Prince Galitzin; but—but—did you not hear a noise?"

"Oh what is all this you tell me? A noise! no, I heard only the beating of my heart, dear, dear Horace."

"Poor little heart! It may have much to make it palpitate yet. If I had only some money for bribery. Oh, if Heaven would only give me the means——"

"Money, Horace, is the root of all evil, says the proverb; and but for the reputation of wealth, I should not be troubled by this Galitzin."

"True; but money is also the root of all good; for none can be done without it."

"How well he speaks English."

"Ah, and French too—the *mouchard*!"

To a certain extent he explained to her, the views, the wishes, but not the ulterior threats of Galitzin in case of her non-compliance; his tender love and her natural delicacy, made him shrink nervously from a hint so odious; but she fully understood and recognised all the danger of the position

occupied by Horace and herself, though she could not quite understand the difficulties. On Horace Ramornie rested all her hopes for weeks past; they must meet some time alone, she had thought, when they should have a careful conference and sudden flight together; though the chief obstacle seemed the want of money, a vehicle and horses. But when he set the latter wants before her, with the moral and military obligations enforced by his parole, the penalties of breaking it, the Cossacks' eyes that seemed constantly to watch him, and the chance of his transmission to Yekaterinoslav, her heart, so full of hope and fond anticipations, seemed to die within her. And little thinking that they were watched by jealous eyes, they would frequently clasp each other's hands by the instinct of sudden affection, and sit thus for precious minutes in silence, gazing into each other's eyes that were full of tenderness and light. When they did speak, it was fortunately in a tone that was low, and heard by themselves only.

"Good Heavens, darling!" said Gwenny, suddenly, "it cannot be that in this time of civilization and progress, as the newspapers call it, we have got into a scrape of the Middle Ages—an adventure worthy of some old castle on the Rhine!"

"I am afraid it looks deuced like it, Gwenny," replied Ramornie: "but oh, if the Allies would only take an airing this way, and knock the whole place to pieces! One Lancaster gun should do it in two hours! but they devote all their energies to Sebastopol, and never think of the petty outposts."

"And oh, Horace, if this man should take me away from you?" suggested Gwenny, in a really piteous tone.

"I would kill him in front of his men!" was the husky reply.

"And be bayoneted or shot instantly?"

"I ran those risks daily with the Fusileers, for no reason that I could see, Gwenny; but Heaven alone knows what you and I shall do!"

"And I had formed such a nice plan for our escape!" said she, mournfully.

"You, my pet, love?"

"Yes," she sobbed.

"And your plan, darling, what was it?"

"Simply this—it involved a little horse stealing, however."

"Go on, Gwenny, go on."

"You know that Madame Tegoborski often drives me out, without any attendants, in her little phaeton, which is drawn by two Tartar ponies; and I thought that if you could contrive to meet us, unexpectedly as it were, a mile or so from this place you might simply assume her seat and whip, and we should drive off together! She would soon give an alarm, of course——"

"Nay, I should tie the old hag hand and foot to a tree——"

"But oh, Horace, wolves might come!"

"Let them," said Ramornie, savagely. "Yours is an admirable plan, and I am astonished that it never occurred to me before ; but it is woman's wit, and you have such a clever little head, darling. Then," he added, with a sigh, "there is my—parole !"

"Oh that weary parole !" exclaimed the girl, and her head and spirit drooped again ; "it destroys our only plan, our sole remaining hope ! This very evening we are to drive so far as the pine wood, on the road between those two great mountains with the fantastic names."

"The Tchatr Dag and the Demirdji."

"Yes ; you know it, then !"

"I have seen the wood from the gate ; it lies some versts beyond the distance I am permitted to go from the glaxis of Yaila."

"Can you *not* break this promise ?" she whispered, imploringly, with her hands on his shoulders and her bright eyes looking imploringly into his.

"No, it is impossible ; an officer's word once given thus is irrevocable !"

"Then I am in despair ! Oh, Horace, Horace, what is to become of us ? What is to become of me ?" exclaimed the girl, in a passion of grief, as she flung herself upon his breast and clung to him, so full of her own and their mutual sorrow that she was quite unconscious of the door having opened and shut, and that Galitzin stood behind her with lowering, inquiring, and malevolent eye.

"You here, Monseigneur le Prince ?" exclaimed Ramornie indignantly, and not without alarm, as he tenderly deposited the half-fainting girl upon a sofa.

"Oui, ma foi !" replied the pale, unhealthy-looking Russian, with his detestable grin ; "and what then ? I was simply adopting the privilege of Le Diable Boiteux, and peeping in here."

"And, doubtless, you have overheard all ?"

"I am sorry to say that I have not."

"How so ?" asked Ramornie, greatly relieved.

"You spoke rather too low for that ; but I can guess its interesting nature, as I have *overseen* all."

"Silence, for Heaven's sake, Prince Galitzin ; do you not see that this young lady is almost fainting, and cannot even speak ?"

"Ah, indeed !" replied Galitzin, scornfully. "'Silence adorns the sex,' says Sophocles ; perhaps silence, seclusion, and salvolatile, together with a glass of kimmel will be advantageous here. Have the goodness to see to this, Madame," he added, as the wife of Tegoborski entered, and with an exhibition of considerable agitation, the exact source of which it might be

difficult to discover, seated herself by the side of Gwenny, while Galitzin, saying to Horace, "Follow me, Monsieur le Capitaine," led him into an adjoining room.

"Now, Monsieur, I must speak plainly," said Galitzin; "we understand each other perfectly, I believe. How often have I made love, as people say, St. Ivan Veliki alone knows; but this time I am in earnest—I have an additional incentive, and shall not be crossed by you. A turn of the wheel of fortune has thrown a golden opportunity in my way, and I shall not be such a fool, such an utter Asiatic, as to neglect it!"

Galitzin paused and breathed hard; for opposition to his wishes had begun to pique and inflame him; while, on the other hand, young Ramornie, proud and fiery by nature, inspired by all the genuine emotions of a gentleman and a free-born Briton, felt as if on the verge of madness, and yet had to be most guarded in all he said and did.

"Beware, Prince Galitzin," said he, as the drowning will cling to straws; "in proposing to marry this orphan girl, you, a foreigner, a stranger, one of a different religion——"

"Bah! you said all this before. What care I, though she were a Hindoo?"

"You promise yourself a month's amusement during the *ennui* of Yaila, forgetting that to her it may be the destruction of a life."

"You mistake me, my would-be Mentor. I promise myself the enjoyment of a fine fortune when the cannon of Cronstadt and the Kremlin announce peace to Europe. But by Heaven I don't understand you, or this tone of insolent advice that you have ventured to adopt!"

"She has trustees—if you understand what I say—and you may not be able to get at her fortune without *their* consent, even if you married her to-morrow," said Ramornie, quietly.

Galitzin seemed to be transported with rage by this new suggestion, for he felt the too probable truth of it.

"Vassili blajennoi!" he exclaimed; "this to me! Say as much more, and I will not give a copper kopec for your life!"

A bitter smile escaped Ramornie on hearing the pious invocation of a saint blended with a threat of violence against himself. For this man had no religion or real veneration for holy things; yet in his superstition or adherence to outward forms and to traditions of the Russian Greek Church, he would as soon have thought of pistolling himself as of sitting down to his dinner of green borsch and stuffed carrots without first bowing to the *eikon*; or of killing and eating one of the countless pigeons, which at Yaila, as in every other Russian edifice, are to be seen clustering in clouds over the roofs, belfries, and cupolas, and sitting in long rows like cornices along the eaves;

for it is pre-eminently the holy bird of the Muscovites. On fast days he would not even look on butter or cream ; but in place thereof, used plenty of oil for his *ouka*, or fish-soup of sterlet or salmon cutlets, pleasantly boiled in vinegar and flour *à la Russe*.

"Do you actually threaten me, a prisoner, an unarmed man?" asked Ramornie, after a pause.

"I do ; so beware, Monsieur le Capitaine, of what you are about. It is not known, I am almost sure, to the Allies that you are in our hands, as you stumbled among us amid the snow on that dark night march to Tchorgoun ; and as yet I have never sent in your name to Prince Mentschicoff. Hence I might, without the slightest risk of being questioned, make as short work with you as I did with that fellow Chesters when on the march to this place. If inclined to be more merciful I could send you inland with a note—a mere note of a few words would do—which would ensure your safe transmission to Tobolsk or Irkutsk. The mines there, if not favourable for the lungs, are admirable for the development of the muscles, and you have been getting fleshy in idleness, though having a thirty-two pound shot at one's heels is apt to cure one of all taste for dancing. Now we understand each other, I think?"

"And this is said to me within fifty miles of the British camp before Sebastopol?" said Horace, with crimsoned brow and sparkling eyes.

"Well, perhaps a few versts more or less."

"Such threats are alike ungenerous and outrageous!"

"I could hang you by the wrists from a tree with a cannon ball for one toe to rest on ; and how should you like forty-eight hours of that without food or water?"

Even that threat was more than sufficient for Horace Ramornie.

"Enough," thought he ; "I shall be at the pine wood this evening, and trust to Heaven and my own wit for the rest!"

"Take care how you trifle with me," said Galitzin, almost as if he understood or read what was passing in the mind of Ramornie. "You will wish yourself among the graves of Inkerman, rather than here, if you bring my jealous vengeance on you."

Horace could scarcely understand to what all these threats tended, but drawing himself up and eyeing the Russian sternly he said, proudly and haughtily—"I demand, Prince Galitzin, that you shall remember that I am a British officer on parole of honour, and in no way subject to you."

"A British officer—bah! I do not forget it. In three days we shall have a convoy proceeding to Yekaterinoslav. Prepare, Monsieur, to accompany it with your hands tied again to the mane of a Tartar pony if you are not marched there on foot!"

And, as Galitzin said this, he bowed and left the room.

"This again more than ever renders my parole null and void," said Horace, in a low and concentrated voice, in which passion and satisfaction were curiously mingled; "three days? now for Gwenny's plan of escape, and this very night too! Blessed be Heaven, that Muscovite rascal did not overhear her!"

CHAPTER LXXI.

A NEW FRIEND.

THERE was something of fierce elation in the mind of Horace Ramornie when he found himself alone! On giving his parole of honour that he should not go beyond a mile from the glacia of Yaila, it had been, of course, distinctly understood that his life must be respected, and his personal liberty too. Now the former had been threatened and the latter also! The compact had thus been vitiated by the Russian Major-General, so Ramornie was free—free to escape when or how he could. He knew the contingencies; that he was certain of a degrading captivity if three days hence found him in Yaila, and certain of death if he fled from it and was *retaken*. Anyway, to free Gwendoleyne Wedderburn was worth risking all for, and that evening he resolved the attempt should be made, minus though he was of arms, money, or a guide. He would simply adopt the plan she had conceived; he should meet her and Madame Tegoborski at the pine wood; assume that lady's place in her vehicle and drive off, testing the speed and muscle of the Tartar ponies to the utmost, and the whole matter seemed very easy, provided no interruption occurred by the way. The plan was only a little horse-stealing from the enemy, and under the high pressure of the circumstances quite justifiable.

About an hour before the projected design, he left Yaila by the barrier-gate, as if for one of his usual solitary strolls, but not without an increased beating of the heart, as he fancied that every stolid-looking Russian sentinel in his flat cap and hideous long clay-coloured coat, eyed him more keenly than was their wont; but this was the mere result of feverish anxiety; and he proceeded slowly along the ancient road that led towards the Black Sea, whose waters he could see in the distance, rippling in golden light at the end of a valley. He frequently paused and seated himself on the grass, again to walk slowly on, thanking his stars that the two Cossacks, Alexis and Ivan—their surnames he never knew—who had been wont to hover, singly or together, so mysteriously on his steps, or within his range of vision, were now absent, having been sent with poor Bob Newnham to Yekaterinoslav.

Sometimes he clasped his hands and looked upward. Was it possible that this night might see him a free man ; free, with Gwenny by his side, and within a few miles of the British outposts ? There are few places where one has been resident even for months only that they do not quit with regret ; but Ramornie simply loathed Yaila in all its features ; the green painted cannon, each with a red cross on its breech, the brick-faced curtains and embrasures, constructed by Baron Todleben, who had also patched up the old towers of the days of Justinian and of the Genoese ; the angular visages and tattered uniforms of the garrison ; the green slopes around and the flat outline of that "table mountain," the Tchatr Dagh towering over all !

Heaven be thanked, he was about to see the last of them—and with Gwenny, too ! He had read of, and fancied many a melodramatic incident ; but scarcely conceived that in sober, civilized life such things could come to pass as had happened to him ; yet our Afghan war, a few years before, and the subsequent Indian Mutiny, were alike full of terrible situations, painful and harrowing escapes and perils, undergone by lovers and friends, by husbands, wives and their children ! But who can foresee the sudden and startling contingencies that are consequent to a state of warfare, especially in wild and lawless lands ?

And now, beyond all their present peril, as he threw himself on the green sward to think and ponder, Horace Ramornie looked forward fondly to spending his future life—a happy home life—with Gwenny, as to a promised land, where they should talk over the *present* with wonder, and even with pleasure ! He was now on the skirts of the pine wood, and being quite concealed by some little caper bushes, could watch the road that led to the quaint old fort on the green hill slope. The crimson light of the setting sun was glowing redly on the gnarled stems and twisted branches of the old forest. All were shining as if with flame, and the birds were singing their last notes loudly amid the wiry foliage. The dry cones were dropping, and the field mice were scampering homeward to their holes under the long rank grass.

Beyond the green Babugan mountains, he could see that the road wound through a shady dell, where the tall white poplar, the dwarf almond and the pretty linden tree grew together in luxuriance ; and by that valley he knew they should have to pass in their flight, after he had possessed himself of Madam's equipage. But how was he to dispose of *her*, and prevent her giving an alarm that in ten or twenty minutes would ensure pursuit ! His eyes seldom turned from the gate of Yaila, as every instant he expected to see the shaggy ponies appear ; and how, if Galitzin took it into his head to accompany them, as he fre-

quently did? He always rode with a pair of revolver pistols in his holsters. As this idea occurred to him, Ramornie looked round for a suitable stone—but hark! There was a sound of hoofs and accoutrements in the valley, and very soon a detachment of Russian cavalry, some fifty files or so, came along at an easy trot, evidently from Tchorgoun.

They were all Don Cossacks, with grey fur caps and huge red moustaches, the twisted points of which were quite visible from behind; their blue tunics worn halfway to the knee were girt by scarlet sashes, and their wide loose trowsers were thrust into their coarse jack-boots; and so defiling past, and chanting a rude hoarse ditty, they passed through the archway and entered Yaila, greatly to the mortification of Horace; for thus Galitzin had at hand swift, ready and instant means of an effectual pursuit and recapture in every direction! Another hour, to the anxious lurker a seeming eternity, passed away, and the sun, which had been above the marble summit of the Tchatr Dag when he first came forth, had sunk behind it now, and his ruddy golden rays spread skyward among the light floating clouds, like the spokes of a fiery wheel, while the singular outlines of the Dimirdji and Babugan mountains rose in purple and black against the red evening clouds. The odour of the wild thyme came pleasantly on the passing wind. The monotonous splash of the water sounded ceaselessly from an ancient stone fountain near—a relic of the Genoese; but though athirst with feverish anxiety Ramornie never drew near it. Close by too were purple grapes, ripe figs, soft peaches and blooming nectarines all growing wild; but he heeded nothing. He ever turned his eyes to Yaila; but the archway appeared only as a black spot in the walls, from whence nothing seemed to issue.

A knowledge that the place where he lay was beyond his paroled distance, added to his anxiety, so his suspense, dread, and doubt, amounted ere long to actual pangs of bodily pain. Was she ill?

“Oh what *can* have happened—why do not they come?” he continued to exclaim from time to time, long after there could be any chance of the Hospoza Tegoborski taking her evening drive.

Suddenly the boom of a cannon gave him a species of electric shock. A thin white puff was curling upwards from the northern bastion of the fort, and he saw the Russian Cross streaming out upon the wind, which brought the sound of drums towards him. Had the garrison received information of an attack? What had happened? He had not a moment to lose now, for even if he saw the columns in red pouring through yonder valley, he must return and report himself to the officer of the main guard—more than all he must return to where *she*

was, and on entering, he found the whole garrison under arms, in two quarter-distance columns, with bayonets fixed, and a fresh supply of ammunition being rapidly distributed from casks which were strewed in front of each regiment.

His heart beat high and happily. An attack, he thought, *must* be expected; and those Don Cossacks were the forewarners of it!

"Do you expect an attack, Monsieur le Colonel?" he inquired in French, of old Tegoborski, as that personage limped past. "I presume those Cossacks brought the intelligence?"

"They have brought none, Monsieur," said Galitzin, ere the Pulkovnick could reply, "They are simply the convoy I spoke of, *en route* to Yekaterinoslav, whether you shall go with them in two days now," he added, with his old smile. He had a peculiarly malevolent pleasure in hurting the feelings of others—of the young especially; for as his own youth was long past, he hated that joyous period of life in any one else.

There was no attack, and the night passed away in peace; but the whole of this sudden alarm and preparation, which thus baffled the plans and hopes of the prisoner, were the mere result of Russian superstition.

The bell of the chapel had fallen from its rusty hook, decayed by time and exposure. This was deemed by the garrison in general, and by Galitzin in particular, as significant of some dire and impending calamity, because the Muscovites deem all bells as something sacred, and when in the preceding February, a great bell fell in the tower of St. Ivan Veliki at Moscow, crashing through four floors in succession and killing all the inmates, it was regarded as the omen of some much greater calamity to Russia; thus, on the day after, news reached the Holy City of the death of the Emperor Nicholas!

Ramornie cursed, in his heart, the wretched superstition by which his only plan had been marred. But one evening now remained to the fugitives, and if it proved one of rain; if Madame Tegoborski had the vapours, or was indisposed to drive, the noon of the third day would see him once more under escort, and accompanying those red-whiskered Don Cossacks, towards the Isthmus of Perecop.

Though Ramornie knew it not, and feared the worst from the plump fair Muscovite with the sleepy eyes, large hands, and snowy arms, she was neither an enemy to him or Gwenny.

With all a woman's quickness, she had seen and discovered their secret—that they were lovers. From a quiet point, through an eyelet-hole, she had overlooked their recent interview which Galitzin had so unceremoniously interrupted, and she became earnestly desirous of succouring them for their sakes, and somewhat for her own, that she might remove from

Yaila and the Prince's vicinity, a rival so wealthy, beautiful, and young, though she had a wholesome terror of him on one hand, and a little, perhaps, of her spouse, the Pulkovnick, on the other.

Lack of language—for she knew only her native Russ and a few stray words of German—rendered the difficulty of arrangements and explanations very great; but, most luckily for the conspiring trio, it chanced that at this very time there had arrived with the detachment of Don Cossacks, an officer of rank, deputed by the Princes Mentschicoff and Gortchakoff to inspect the garrison with its stores and report thereon, as both Kertch and Yenekale had been captured by the Allies, and several discrepancies had been detected in the nominal returns of Prince Galitzin; in short, the “men of straw” in his muster-rolls had been suspected, and the pressure of affairs in Sebastopol rendered further trifling impossible. So His Excellency had his hands full.

One interview with Gwenny and Ramornie sufficed to complete their new plan. Madame's arrangements were simply and speedily made for their flight, and, in a burst of gratitude, he threw his arms around her ample waist and kissed her on both cheeks—a process to which, as he was a more than usually good-looking young fellow, she submitted with the best grace in the world.

Taking advantage of the confusion—almost consternation—and occupation of Galitzin and the Pulkovnick, Madame arranged that she should ride her saddle horse, a fine and active Tartar one, next evening to the pine wood, accompanied by Gwenny on foot. There Ramornie was to precede them, and lie *perdue* as before. She would mount the lady, and he must lead her bridle; their way should lie through the Baider Pass, some fifty miles to Balaclava. They must travel in the night, conceal themselves by day, and trust for the rest to God, she added, bowing to the *eikon* in the corner.

She did more: knowing the great risk run by Ramornie if he travelled in a red coat (or the remains of that which once had been a *red* coat) she supplied him with a Russian caftan of canvas, girt in the approved fashion with a rope. Still he was without arms, and he donned this ungraceful attire, never reflecting the while, that if he appeared thus within range of a sentinel of the Allies, he might be shot ere he could answer a single inquiry.

All succeeded beyond even their fondest anticipations: and when, next evening, the shadow of the Tchatr Dagh fell on the pine wood and the valley of the wild almond and linden trees, Madame Tegoborski was lingering on the Yaila road, looking back, and kissing her hand to the retiring figures of Ramornie

and Gwenny, whose newly acquired horse he led by the bridle, as they descended into a steep dark glen that they believed was ultimately to lead them to the Pass of Baider.

CHAPTER LXXII.

THE LOST PATH.

"FIFTY miles, and for you afoot! Oh, Horace, Horace, I can never be so selfish as to ride!" said Gwenny, in sorrow and commiseration.

"It is only two very long days' marches, Gwenny," he replied, cheerfully, for his heart was beating happily, and he paused a moment to look back, to caress, and kiss the gloveless hand that held the reins. "The last portion we may take leisurely," he added, "for then we shall be near old Colin Campbell's headquarters. What a trump Madame Tegoborski has proved after all! and yesterday I actually thought of tying her neck and heels with a vine trailer. Thank Heaven, the darkness comes on fast!"

But unfortunately, with the darkness there set in a dense white mist from the Euxine. It came rolling in masses along the grassy valleys and up the rocky mountain slopes, and ere long amid it and the obscurity of the night, all trace of the narrow roadway became as completely lost as if it lay under the snow drifts of that night of the fatal march to Tchorgoun!

Muffled in a warm cloak of the Hospoza's, Gwenny did not feel cold; but her heart, like that of her companion, became filled with natural anxiety. They had completely lost the path now, and the horse, though led carefully by the bridle, stumbled and lost its footing every moment amid loose stones, caper-bushes, and stunted turpentine trees, on what seemed to be the slope of a mountain side. At last Horace paused in utter irresolution, and the bead drops rolled from his temples. For aught he knew to the contrary, he and his companion might be proceeding straight to, and not from, Yaila, and daybreak might find them in sight of it! Lost together on a dark mountain side in Crim Tartary, how strange it seemed to Horace, the knowledge that the girl whose soft and plaintive accents came to his ear from time to time, was the same bright and light-hearted Gwenny from whom he had parted in the drawing-room at Willowdean when he left home to rejoin the Fusileers, and dared only press her hand—she whom he had clasped to his breast so tenderly before. Yet so it was, and truth is stranger than fiction!

The livelong night they wandered slowly and irresolutely

there, and Gwenny was sinking with fatigue, while Horace, preternaturally wakeful and nervous, listened for every passing sound ; but none came on the soft breeze that sighed through the waste so lightly as scarcely to roll the mist before it. No Russian drum or bugle, no sound of alarm-bell, and no Cossack halloo were then "piercing the night's dull ear." All was still, and when grey dawn began to break and the mists to exhale upward, the wanderers found themselves yet somewhere about the base of the Tchatr Dag, and near a Tartar farm or large cottage. Horace swept the landscape with a keen and haggard eye ; no vestige of Yaila, with its four green domes, and no sign of scouting horseman could be seen. All the land seemed woody and fertile, but desolate of people. That was well and his mind was relieved ; but his delicate companion required instant rest and succour, so he approached the dwelling of the Tartar with mingled hope and anxiety.

Early abroad, the Tartar farmer met them at his door, and surveyed them with doubt and distrust. He was a keen-eyed and sharp-featured man, of middle age ; his shaggy black brows seeming to mingle with the fur of his sable cap. His features were not of the flat Mongolian type, but were pleasing, regular, and fair. He saw that the lady was weary, and required alike food and rest ; and when she had dismounted, he led them into a room, softly carpeted and cushioned, with a fireplace in it—a mark of civilization—and a little table, some twelve inches high, in the centre, whereon he placed milk, curds, and cake ; but Ramornie made Gwenny imbibe some Crimskoi wine from a crystal cup ; and being without money, she pressed upon the Tartar's acceptance one of the rings she wore, and he took it, glancing with undisguised covetousness at those which still remained upon her slender fingers.

To his alarm, Horace discovered that they were not far from the hated Yaila. In fact, amid the mist, they had been describing a kind of circle in their peregrinations overnight, at the base of the Tchatr Dag, and even the southern end of the pine wood was still visible ! Gwenny seemed already so worn and weary, after all she had undergone of late, that Ramornie had great fear of her ability to keep in her saddle till she could reach Balaclava ; and he conceived the idea of getting succour from thence half-way. In a strange Polyglot kind of language, partly Turkish, English, and Italian, eked out by signs, he contrived to make the Tartar understand that he wished a message taken to Balaclava, and his host averring that he had a swift horse, offered to bear it, if paid therefor ; so all Gwenny's rings were to be his on the answer coming back, and she freely proffered them.

"May Allah increase the glory and the substance of my

lord!" whined the Tartar; "and mayest thou never know hunger," he added to Gwenny, giving her the kindest wish of his people. "Drink," he continued, giving her more of the effervescing and refreshing Crimskoi; "it is pure as the holy well of Mecca:" but she closed her eyes wearily, as if to sleep. and Ramornie surveyed her with apprehension and solicitude, as she lay back on the cushioned divan, listless and pale.

Oh, if she should become seriously ill on his hands in that wild and out-of-the-way place—so near Yaila, too! He asked for writing materials. None were to be had; but a quill plucked from a hen's wing, a little gunpowder mixed with water, and a fly-leaf, torn from an old Koran, thus making the message more sacred, supplied the three requisites: and Ramornie wrote a note to be delivered to the officer commanding the nearest out-post, imploring that succour should be sent along the road that led by the seashore from Balaclava towards Alushta; and adding, that if an attack on Yaila were projected, there were only in the place two Russian battalions, of four companies each, and twenty pieces of cannon, the heaviest being 32-pounders. He added his name, rank, and regiment; and requested the Tartar to depart at once, showing him all the rings that glittered on the white hands of the now sleeping girl, as the reward of his speed and fidelity.

"May Allah increase the glory——" began the Tartar again.

"There, now," interrupted Horace, "that will do. Be off; spare not spur nor whip, and the reader of my message may also reward you for our sake."

"Speech is silver; silence is gold," replied the Tartar, sententiously, and a few minutes after saw him mounted and away at a gallop southward, by the road towards the headquarters of Sir Colin Campbell; and again hope began to dawn in the breast of Ramornie.

In front of the flat-roofed farmhouse there rose a steep ridge of rocks. Up these he clambered to watch the progress of his messenger; and how great was his disgust, his disappointment, and anger, when he saw the fellow, after conceiving himself quite out of sight, ride directly *north*, and disappear past the edge of the old pine wood, along the road direct for Yaila. He had gone to betray them to Galitzin—to that Galitzin, whose scouting Cossacks might even now be within a few versts of them!

Inspired anew by anxiety and alarm, he hastened to rouse poor weary Gwendoleyne, and replacing her in the saddle, after appropriating a sabre that hung on the wall, they set forth in search of another place of rest or refuge. A narrow, winding, and sombre path, overhung by oaks and beeches, soon hid the house of the traitor from the fugitives. The morning was clear

now, and the sun shone cheerily along the mighty green slopes and impending cliffs of the Tchatr Dagh. After a time the trees were left behind, and rocks alone bordered the way. Ramornie looked for a place of shelter, and if possible, of repose, for his delicate companion, for Gwenny was sinking fast. At length, his keen and haggard eyes detected a dark fissure in the red marble cliffs. He hobbled the horse in a little thicket of turpentine trees, and half leading, half carrying his tender charge, he conveyed her into what ultimately proved to be a cave, strewed apparently with dry chips and white branches of trees; but these, in fact, were human bones—the relics of a Tartar slaughter—for they were in the famous grotto of Foul Kouba.

He placed her on a ledge of rock, and wrapping her cloak about her, kissed her on both eyelids, and bade her sleep if she could, while he would wait and watch. Looking forth from the mouth of this uncouth hiding-place, he could discern about six miles distant the four white towers of Yaila shining in the sun; but no figures were stirring in the open ground between. Again he turned to watch his sleeping charge, and then what were his horror and dismay to see the figure of an armed Cossack, who had evidently issued from the inner part of their retreat, bending over her with curiosity, pistol in hand.

CHAPTER LXXIII.

PERA.

ROBBED and stripped by plunderers, in short by the Cossacks of the escort, of their money, jewels, and even their outer garments, Lady Wedderburn and Lady Ernescleugh reached Balaclava, the neat white houses of which were now almost hidden by more recent erections of huts, stores, and so forth, even as its slender population of Arnaouts had become lost amid the overwhelming numbers of its new occupants, the Highland Brigade, Rifles, and other British soldiers of all arms and uniforms; and in the distance their anxious eyes could see the three-tiered batteries, the green domed churches, and the lofty houses of that Sebastopol, whose name was then in the mouths of half the world.

They reached the headquarters of Sir Colin Campbell in such a plight, and in such a state of excitement, that the testy but warm-hearted old Scottish General, after telling them that it was alike impossible for them to go to the front, or to remain in Balaclava, as deaths were occurring every hour by cholera, and that the Sardinians at Tchorgoun had lost a thousand men in three weeks by disease, transmitted them without much cere-

mony on board a steamer, then just starting for Scutari; and before the poor ladies quite knew where they were, they found her steaming out of the harbour of Balaclava, amid all the *débris* of wreck and drift-wood, and the festering and floating carcasses of cavalry horses which encumbered it. There, at Scutari, they had been told by some one, they knew not who—a staff officer apparently, in tattered uniform, with a haversack under his arm, and wearing a prodigious beard—they “should get intelligence of their sons.”

The boat left the vessel's side and he was gone.

“Has Cyril been wounded again?” thought Lady Wedderburn; but ere long, on board the steamer, she learned all!

Poor Cyril had fallen at the head of his company, on the 8th of the preceding June, in the memorable attack, when the great Mamelon, the Quarries, and the White Works were stormed and taken by the Allies. On that occasion, among a host of others, the Master of Ernescleugh had been wounded, and sent to Scutari, so it was to him that Sir Colin Campbell's aide-de-camp had referred.

Who can open the Book of Destiny, or see the slender thread, the link or chain of events, that leads to fortune or to fame—to misery or calamity? Happy it is for us that we can never see the future! Cyril had fallen by a ball through the chest, at the base of the Piquet House Hill, and there he lay, while the tide of his comrades swept on—lay dying and alone, under the sultry sun, while the dull mist of intense heat mingled with the smoke of the conflict, and settled down in the breathless valley, where there was no air to rend it aside; and as his blood and his life ebbed together, there seemed to come to his drowsy ear the voice of Mary Lennox, singing, and he thought himself again listening to her in the garden at Lonewoodlee. It was the voice of a French sister of charity, at a little distance. She was chanting the *De Profundis* amid some dying Zouaves, and when her song ceased the soul of Cyril Wedderburn had passed away.

Upon the table in his hut the poor fellow had left a will, hurriedly written. Therein, after piously giving his soul to God, and his body to be buried by the finders, if he fell, he bequeathed certain sums to wounded soldiers of the Fusileers and to the widows and orphans of others who had fallen in the war. His love he left to his parents, brother, and all friends, adding that he would die at peace and with goodwill to all men. And so he was found lying on his face stone dead when the burial parties came. Nightfall saw the handsome and gallant soldier shovelled away, with hundreds of others, into the trench-grave—“the vast lumber-house of death”—and the secrets of Mary's love, and of all her sorrows, were buried with him.

Cyril dead ! Oh, could it be, thought Lady Wedderburn, that all the objects and wishes of her life had changed within so short a space of time ?

" Oh ! my Cyril, my son, my pride ! and has it ended here, and ended thus ? " she wailed out on the breast of Lady Ernescleugh, when she read the last letter sealed for her, and left in his hut. " Oh, where now are all my fond aspirations ! oh, my hope ! my joy ! they have ended now in death ! Oh, Cyril ! why did I ever bear or nurse you ? Yet, I am enduring only what many a poor mother has endured since this fatal war began."

And she wept long the tears of unavailing sorrow, while her maternal heart went sadly home, and back to the sweet days of his tender and loving childhood, when he, who had fallen a handsome and stately soldier, had clung to her skirts, clambered at her knees, and nestled in her bosom, a beautiful, a happy and smiling child with dark eyes and golden hair ; and so the loss of her son, combined with keen and sharp anxiety for Gwendoleyne, brought on a species of low and nervous fever, under which she lingered on for many weary weeks in Misseri's Frankish Hotel at Pera. She was not confined to bed, but lay propped on a sofa at the open window, from whence she could see the vast and glittering panorama of Stamboul and all the Golden Horn, with the three-deckers of Abdul Medjid lying at anchor, with the star and crescent flying ; but nothing could rouse her. She thought ever of the dead Cyril, the lost Gwenny, and her now futile wish.

" Oh, wherefore should we heap up riches," she would say, " when, as the Scripture tells us, we know not who shall gather them ! Oh, Juliana dear," she added to Lady Ernescleugh, whose son was now convalescent, and was able to lounge about Pera with glazed boots and carefully parted hair, " I did not think it possible that I could have heard of my Cyril's death, though daily I knew he risked life, and yet live on as I am living. But I don't think I shall survive it long. See, my poor hair has become quite grey, and is coming out fast."

" Use cantharides, dear," lisped Lady Ernescleugh, as she lounged on a satin divan and fanned herself with a bunch of feathers in a pearl handle ; " it is an excellent specific," she added, as she saw that her friend's " division " was becoming wider than its wont.

So the quiet, unsentimental and unenthusiastic Robert Wedderburn, who had in his time " spoiled more foolscap than cartridge paper," plodding over his books in the Temple, became the heir of Willowdean and the old baronetcy, the stately mansion, and the Burgh of Barony, with all their political interests, while a grass-covered mound at the base of the Piquet House Hill, was all that remained to his elder brother.

CHAPTER LXXIV.

THE CAVE OF FOUL KOUBA.

"A COSSACK, a dog of a Cossack, by Heaven!" exclaimed Horace Ramornie, in a low voice of intense emotion, as he unsheathed the sabre with which he had provided himself at the house of the Tartar, and saw his apparent foe, a wild-looking fellow, with matted hair and cap to match, and clad in a rough shoubah, come hastily towards him.

"English, now thank God!" exclaimed the seeming Cossack, in whom Horace instantly recognised Newnham, the commander of the yacht. "May I never!" he added, turning to the sleeping girl, of whose face only the handsome mouth and set of small white teeth were visible. "By Jove! if this isn't Miss Wedderburn, and you—you in the caftan like a Ruski?"

"Captain Ramornie, of the Royal Fusileers."

"And don't you recognise me—Bob Newnham?"

"Of course I do," was the response; and they shook hands heartily, each being intensely relieved by discovering *who* the other was; and the sound of their voices awoke the sleeper. Alarm was her first emotion, and then her natural sense of fun caused her to laugh at the odd figure cut by her old friend Newnham; for they had been great friends on board the yacht, the poor and soured Lieutenant R.N., having sunned himself for a time in the charm of her society, though he knew that the pleasure would end some day, but not so disastrously as it had come to pass.

"By Jove, Ramornie, I feel almost comfortable now and quite happy, for the idea that Miss Wedderburn was in the hands of those beastly Ruskies was maddening to me," said Newnham, when he had heard their story. "I wish I had a pipeful of tobacco or a cigar, however. I have often made both one and t'other do duty in place of fire or a tot of hot grog on a cold night-watch."

"But how did you escape and obtain these arms?"

"And this elegant costume? Well, if you guessed till your hair was grey and as long as the Atlantic cable, you never would hit on the right thing. It happened in this way. The two fellows who escorted me proceeded for, I don't know how many miles, towards Perecop, passing between Karasu Bazar and the Putrid Sea, till one fine day, about a week ago, they made a halt on the banks of the Karasu, in a fertile and beautiful valley, covered with yellow and green tobacco fields; and though we had gone so far, still the flat scalp of this mountain, the Tchatr Dag, was visible at the southern horizon. That I might share

their black bread and quass they took the devilish handcuffs off me, but each had by him a sabre and loaded pistols, as a hint of what I might expect if I attempted anything unpleasant.

"The scenery was lovely, the air delightful, and the halt most welcome; for I was weary and thirsty; but the *dolce far niente* character of our little picnic underwent a rapid change. It chanced that the Cossack named Ivan had planted his butt-end fairly upon a hollow place, containing a large wasps' nest. On finding himself stung by one, he furiously discharged a pistol into the hole, and in a moment the air was black with them. They came not alone from that hole, but from a score of others. I sprang to my feet and bolted a little way, for in a trice the two Cossacks were covered with them, wasps and bees too, were on their faces, necks, ears, and hands. They buried their heads in the long grass; they roared, and raved, and rolled about in utter agony, so I resolved to lose no time in making the best of the opportunity. I seized the cap of one, the shoubah of another, then provided myself with the arms of Ivan and the horse of Alexis, and leaving them to their sorrows rode as if the devil was after me, by the very way we had come. In fact, I rode till my horse dropped under me, and I was compelled to leave it, poor animal, to the vultures. Then I lost my way, and for days have been wandering, feeding myself on whatever I could pick up, till chance last night brought me this way, and here I am."

Newnham related his adventures so briefly and jauntily that even Gwenny could not help smiling through her tears.

"Come, Miss Wedderburn," said he, "don't have a faint heart in harbour, after having shown a brave one at sea."

"But we're not in harbour yet, Captain Newnham."

"We soon shall be, and laugh over all these things. You have had a lucky escape from that rascally Russian, and in my heart I thank God for it," said he, kindly patting her fingers with his strong brown hand. "It is a queer bunk this," he added, surveying the cave, and looking at the sunny landscape that stretched far away below its mouth or arch of rock, which seemed to form a frame for it like that of a picture; "but what are all these that strew the floor?"

"Bones," said Horace, in a low voice.

"Bones!"

"Yes, human ones. Hush!"

In this cavern a party of Genoese had been smoked to death by the Tartars (just as the French used to make a *razzia* among the Arabs in Algeria), and their bones are still lying there. So at this hour the tourist in the Scottish Hebrides may see in the cavern at Eigg the bones of the Macleans, who were there smoked to death in a similar fashion by the Macdonalds. This

Crimean den is of vast extent ; for Monsieur Oudinet, a Frenchman, is said to have "penetrated half a day's journey into it, without reaching the end." Be that as it may, our fugitives contented themselves with lingering at the mouth thereof.

Though they had no food, the day passed rapidly ; they had all so much to say and to tell each other, and it was proposed that at nightfall Gwenny should mount again, and some progress be made towards the valley of Baidar. Balaclava could only be some thirty-seven miles distant. So, when evening came and the shadows of the Tchatr Dagb fell far across the sunlit valley, and melted away in general darkness, Newnham crept forth to scout and listen ; for mist was stealing in from the sea again.

Secure for the time, as they deemed themselves in that uncouth place of shelter and secrecy, Gwendoleyne laid her throbbing temples on the breast of Ramornie, nestling herself there, as if sure of peace and security, while he pressed his lips to her brow from time to time ; and so they remained silent, hand in hand, heart speaking to heart only, till a sound aroused them.

"It was Newnham creeping in to announce that "some infernal Ruskies were in motion in the valley below, as he could hear by their horses' hoofs ;" doubtless a scouting party brought by the treacherous Tartar.

A low cry of alarm escaped Gwenny,

"Now do take heart, Miss Wedderburn," urged Newnham ; "remember that, as some writer has it, 'no pleasure is lasting that is not dashed with a sense of danger.'"

At that moment the Tartar horse hobbled in the thicket below neighed ; after a few seconds there was a response from another amid the mist below. Then came the sound of voices, and of feet, as if many men were scrambling up to the mouth of the cavern, and Horace felt his heart beating painfully and wildly, as he clutched his sabre, resolved to die hard. To do that was easy, but what of Gwenny then ?

Through the gloom and obscurity of the misty night they could see the figures of the dismounted Cossacks making their way up the slope ; but just as the foremost had come within twenty yards of the hiding-place there was the report of musketry on the road below, and by the flashes it became evident that an exchange of shots was taking place between the Russians and some hostile force.

The leading Cossack paused, and next moment a huge stone, hurled from the hand of Ramornie, dashed him into the mist below. His comrades lingered doubtfully in the ascent, as if they knew not whether to fall back or advance, for the firing continued to increase in the dark below, and by the distance

between the flashes it seemed to have been opened by troops extended in skirmishing order, feeling their way as they slowly advanced.

Suddenly a loud and authoritative voice rang out, and once more the ascent to the cave of Foul Kouba was resumed, while a large and brilliant fireball, thrown almost into its mouth, revealed all within. Steadily it burned in the still atmosphere of the breathless night, casting a green and ghastly glare on the red marble walls and arched roof of the vast natural grotto, lighting up many a point and feature hitherto unseen in its gloomy recesses, on the wild weeds that grew in luxuriance about its entrance, on the whitened bones that strewed its floor, on the shrinking figure of the pale and terrified girl, and on her two guardians crouching, each with sabre and pistol in hand, behind a mass of rock, intent only on defending her to the last gasp and dying as hard as possible.

Steadily, we say, burned the weird and ghastly light, and the first face it fell upon was that of Galitzin. He had lost his cap in the ascent, and was clad in his light green uniform lapelled with white. He was armed with a sabre and revolver pistol.

He fired the latter thrice at Ramornie, but the balls only starred the rocks behind him, and the echoes found a hundred reverberations in the black profundity beyond. The sneering courtesy, the sleek aspect, the cold and glittering smile of Galitzin, all were gone now, and the eyes, the bearing, and the expression of the human tiger had replaced them. The man looked all instinct with ferocity and recklessness. He was haggard, ghastly, and savage, as he cast one furious and inquiring glance to where the rifles were flashing through the gloom below, and then sprang into the mouth of the rocky den with uplifted sword, to be instantly cut down by Horace; for the sharp and trenchant Damascus blade, of which he had so opportunely possessed himself, clove the truculent Muscovite to the left eye, and he fell prone at his feet without a groan!

Another who followed him was shot by Newnham, who speedily despatched two more with his sword; and now, scared by the fall of their leader and by the increasing fire of musketry in the mist below, all who were ascending fled down the slope and disappeared, leaving the fugitives free; but one, ere he went, discharged his carbine back at random, and by this Parthian shot Ramornie had his right arm broken above the elbow.

"Vive la France!" cried a voice out of the obscurity. "Mes Zouaves, suivez-moi!"

Then, after a time, came the sound of the Scottish bagpipes, and of the shrill Zouave trumpets, sounding the advance.

"By Jove! an attacking force at last, and not a moment too soon!" exclaimed Bob Newnham.

The tread of feet, passing double-quick along the valley below, re-echoed for a time, and occasional shots were heard and flashes seen, dying away in distance and obscurity. Newnham, to prevent Gwenny being shocked, trundled the fallen Russians down the slope ; and the remainder of the night was passed in hope mingled with suspense and anxiety.

When day dawned, the white flag had disappeared from Yaila, and two of darker tints were floating over its leaden domes, doubtless the union and the tricolour ; and two columns of infantry, one in red and one in blue, were encamped on the plain within a mile of Yaila.

Still the fugitives did not venture forth, though Ramornie was enduring the greatest pain in his wounded arm, and Gwenny was overwhelmed with grief about him, as she sat by his side watching his pale face, while he clenched his teeth to conceal his agony. About noon two mounted officers in French uniform came galloping back to the lurking-place to discover who had been firing from thence over-night ; and one of these proved to be Colonel De La Fosse, who informed them that Sir Colin Campbell, on ascertaining the exact whereabouts of Yaila, had dispatched a regiment of his Highland Brigade with a few guns towards it, in conjunction with the 34th Infanterie de la Ligne and a battalion of Zouaves sent by General Bosquet. To this combined force the Pulkovnick Tegoborski had surrendered without firing a shot, and all his garrison were prisoners of war.

"*Sacre tonnerre !*" added the Frenchman, "and yonder fellow lying dead on the slope is the spy,—after all—aha, *le scelerat !*"

"He is the Prince Galitzin," said Horace.

"Cut down by Captain Ramornie, and serve him right," added Newnham.

"And you, Mademoiselle, ma douce amie," said the Colonel, approaching Gwenny, cap in hand ; "this is no place for you, so we shall forward you to Balaclava in a Tartar kabitka ; and meantime I shall send the surgeon of the Scottish regiment to dress your wounded arm, Monsieur le Capitaine. Aha, mon brave ! we have just come in time ; but by the horns of the devil, I would rather have cut off my moustachios than have had that pitiful Russian mouchard to escape. And now, adieu ! for I must ride back to Yaila."

"We shall meet again, I hope, Monsieur le Colonel ?" said Ramornie, cheerfully.

"Allons ! I hope so ; all the roads in the world lead to Rome—or to Heaven. Adieu, Mademoiselle !" he added, and lifting his kepi, bowed low and hurried to where his horse awaited him. But they were fated never to see the gallant Louis De la

Fosse again, as on the 8th of the following September, he fell at the head of the 34th Infanterie, at the storming of the Malakoff Tower.

CHAPTER LXXV.

CONCLUSION.

THEY joined Lady Wedderburn at Misseri's in Pera, and her reunion with Gwenny was the first gleam of joy that had visited the poor woman's heart since that morning on which the stranded yacht was so foully cannonaded by the Russians.

After his wound was dressed, Horace had paid a farewell visit to his comrades at the trenches, and brought away his cousin Cyril's baggage; but the packing thereof—slight and slender though his fighting wardrobe was—proved a sorrowful task; for few mementos bring the presence of the dead so powerfully before us as garments they have worn, or the objects of their solicitude. Among other things Horace found Maltese crosses, Gozza buttons from Valetta, roseleaf bracelets full of sweet perfume from Stamboul for his mother, Gwenny, and even little Miss M'Caw; a Turkish pipe for Bob, swords from the Alma, bayonets from Inkerman, a fragment of an iron shell from the Valley of Death for Sir John—suitable present for everybody.

His tattered Fusileer uniform, his bruised epaulettes, his Indian medals and rusted sword were brought away by Horace. Then too his photos, little mementos of the happy home circle, each and all treasured as sacred *lares* by Cyril in that Crimean hut, and often looked at fondly and lingeringly in the long hours of the weary night, while the great guns were heard pounding away, and men were dying fast amid the frozen mud and gore of the fatal trenches.

A few letters there were, at which Horace glanced; they were in a lady's hand, and tied up with a white riband. Ramornie dared not read more than a line, for the secrets of the dead are sacred; but they were full of earnest, passionate, and girlish love, frank, tender, and adoring; for they were the few—a dozen or so—that Cyril had received in happier days from Mary Lennox.

Now both hearts were still—still for ever; and the spirit that had invoked spirit were perhaps together now, in the Shadowy Land that lies beyond human ken.

Horace placed the packet in the camp fire that burned outside the hut, and after watching the embers smoulder, resumed his sorrowful packing with one hand. These letters seemed now but as "the vague shadows of a vague existence."

"Life is made up of bitterness, Gwenny," said Lady Wedderburn, as she caressed the girl's head in her bosom, "and I have brought a few upon myself and you; but ere long we shall be safe at home. Yet Cyril, my darling Cyril, can never be restored to me, and it seems so cruel and strange that I shall never see him more!" And as she spoke all her mother's heart—and God knoweth how great a heart that is—went forth for the dead son. "My poor Cyril!" she resumed, as she resigned her to Horace. "I cannot conceal from you, Gwenny, that I had other views and another wish concerning you; but God hath willed it otherwise, and may you and Horace be happy!"

A few days after this saw them all "off for Old England, as fast as black diamonds and boiling water could turn the screw-propeller," to quote Bob Newnham, who was left behind in command of a large transport, a post procured for him by Lady Ernescleugh.

"Oh, I am so thankful!" exclaimed Gwenny, looking at the canvas as it was sheeted home to accelerate the vessel's speed.

"Thankful for what, darling?" asked Horace; "to be free?"

"Not that alone, but to be once more upon the sea—the great ocean; it is like the beginning of home."

"Home, Gwenny, darling? we are not yet past Seraglio Point. Yet I understand your feeling."

"So do I, Miss Wedderburn," said Newnham, whose boat was alongside, and who was gazing on her admiringly. "You feel like myself; that when on blue water you are on the high road to Old England. Ah, you should be a sailor's wife!"

"Ah! but she is to be a soldier's," said Horace, "and the water is green here."

"And green water always shoals," replied Newnham; and bidding them a laughing farewell he descended the side ladder and shoved off to his transport.

Though clouded by natural regret for Cyril, the heart of Gwenny was full of happiness, and her dark eyes shone with liquid light, while all her face seemed to beam with sweetness and bright intellect as she surveyed Horace Ramornie, her future husband, and admired his perfect features, his erect air, broad chest, and lithe figure so full of strength and symmetry, all save the poor wounded arm in its scarf of black silk.

She was with him she loved and who loved her. She forgot the past and all her tears, and absolutely blushed at her own joy as the great steamer sped on its homeward path, their eyes ever seeking each other, and never, never wearying of the search.

Her glossy black hair was simply braided and girt by tiny diamond stars upon a narrow velvet band round her head, displaying the pretty ears and fine contour of her neck and throat. Her dress was black silk, trimmed with narrow white

lace, and she had silver bracelets, necklet, and cross, all enamelled with black, as mourning for her cousin.

"Ah," thought Horace, as he surveyed her, while she sat on the poop twirling her parasol under the awning, "who in the world, with any idea of joy or happiness, would be a bachelor!"

But neither could say all they felt then—

"For words are weak and hard to seek,
When wanted fifty-fold;
And then if silence will not speak,
Nor trembling lip, nor changing cheek,
There's nothing to be told!"

If it is difficult to describe our own happiness it becomes next to impossible to pourtray that of others. So we shall not attempt to expatiate upon the emotions of Gwenny and Rarmornie; yet, like all happiness, it had its alloy, for they could not but revert to the memory of him who lay in his lone grave by the Picquet House Hill.

"I couldn't send in my papers, Gwenny, even as your rich husband, while the war lasted, but this broken arm luckily settles all for me," said Horace. "It is England and sick leave in the first place."

"With me for your nurse—and your dear little wife, Horace."

They looked back from the poop, for now they were in the Sea of Marmora. The tall cypresses of Scutari, the mosques, the domes and minarets, and all the flags of Stamboul, the city of the Sultan, had lessened in the distance, and were blending with the golden evening haze as they sped on the world of waters; and when the night came down, and the stars came out in the deep calm blue of the sky, Gwenny still sat there, with her hands clasped in those of her future husband—the realization of a young girl's dream.

THE END.

THE
KING'S OWN BORDERERS

A MILITARY ROMANCE

BY

JAMES GRANT

AUTHOR OF "THE ROMANCE OF WAR"

"Memories fast are thronging o'er me,
Of the grand old fields of Spain ;
How he faced the charge of Junot,
And the fight where Moore was slain.
Oh the years of weary waiting
For the glorious chance he sought,
For the slowly ripened harvest
That life's latest autumn brought."

LONDON
GEORGE ROUTLEDGE AND SONS
THE BROADWAY, LUDGATE
NEW YORK: 416 BROOME STREET

BY JAMES GRANT.

Price 2s. each, Fancy Boards.

THE ROMANCE OF WAR.
THE AIDE-DE-CAMP.
THE SCOTTISH CAVALIERS.
BOTHWELL.
JANE SETON; OR, THE KING'S ADVOCATE.
PHILIP ROLLO.
THE BLACK WATCH.
MARY OF LORRAINE.
OLIVER ELLIS; OR, THE FUSILIERS.
LUCY ARDEN; OR, HOLLYWOOD HALL.
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THE YELLOW FRIGATE.
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LAURA EVERINGHAM; OR, THE HIGHLANDERS OF GLENORA.
THE CAPTAIN OF THE GUARD.
LETTY MYDE'S LOVERS.
THE CAVALIERS OF FORTUNE.
SECOND TO NONE.
THE CONSTABLE OF FRANCE.
THE PHANTOM REGIMENT.
THE GIRL HE MARRIED.
FIRST LOVE AND LAST LOVE.
DICK RODNEY.
THE WHITE COCKADE.
THE KING'S OWN BORDERERS.
LADY WEDDERBURN'S WISH.
ONLY AN ENSIGN.
JACK MANLY.
THE ADVENTURES OF ROB ROY.
THE QUEEN'S CADET.
UNDER THE RED DRAGON.
SHALL I WIN HER?
FAIRER THAN A FAIRY.
THE SECRET DISPATCH.
ONE OF THE SIX HUNDRED.
MORLEY ASHTON.

GEORGE ROUTLEDGE AND SONS,
THE BROADWAY, LUDGATE.

PREFACE.

IN the following volume I have endeavoured to delineate the career of a soldier—and of a character that has not as yet, I think, figured in the pages of our military novelists—a Gentleman Volunteer, serving with a line regiment in time of war, according to a custom which survived even the memorable battles of the Peninsula.

As the scene of his adventures (some of which are not quite fictitious), I have chosen the expedition under the gallant and ill-fated Sir John Moore, as it has scarcely, if ever, been made the theme of a military romance.

No history of the 25th Foot is in existence; hence, as the brief outline of its early career is substantially correct, it may prove of interest to some readers.

I may add that the 94th regiment mentioned occasionally, is the *old* 94th or “Scots Brigade,” which came from the service of the States General, and was disbanded after Waterloo.

The corps at present bearing the same number in the Army List was also, however, raised in Scotland, but in December, 1823; and on that occasion the green standard of the old brigade of gallant memory was borne through the streets, from the castle of Edinburgh, by a soldier of the Black Watch.

26, DANUBE STREET,
EDINBURGH.

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THE

KING'S OWN BORDERERS.

CHAPTER I.

LADY WINIFRED.

"Thick, thick—no sight remains the while,
From the farthest Orkney Isle,
No sight to seahorse or to seer,
But of a little pallid sail,
That seems as if 'twould struggle near,
And then as if its pinion pale
Gave up the battle to the gale."—LEIGH HUNT.

ON the afternoon of a lowering day in the November of 1798, a square-rigged vessel—a brig of some three hundred and fifty tons—was seen in the offing, about twelve miles distant from the bluff, rocky headland of Rohallion, on the western coast of Carrick, beating hard against a headwind and sea, that were set dead in shore; and, as a long and treacherous reef, locally known as the Partan Craig (*Anglicé* Crab-rock), lies off the headland, many fears were loudly expressed by on-lookers, that if she failed to gain even better sea room ere nightfall, the gale, the waves, and the current might prove too much for her in the end, and the half-sunken reef would finish the catastrophe.

Over the craig the angry breakers of the Firth of Clyde were seen to boil and whiten, and the ridgy reef seemed to rise, at times, like a hungry row of shark's teeth, black, sharp, and shining.

With royal yards on deck, with topsails lowered upon the caps, her fore and main courses close-hauled, with a double reef in each, the stranger was seen to lie alternately on the port and starboard tack, and braced so close to the wind's eye as a square-rigged craft dared be; but still she made but little way to seaward.

From Rohallion there were two persons who watched her struggles with deep interest.

"The turn of the tide will strengthen the current, my lady, and bring her close to the craig, after all," said one.

"Under God's favour, John Girvan, I hope not!" was the fervent response.

"This is an eddy between the craig and the coves of Rohallion as strong as the whirlpool of Corryvreckan itself."

"Yes, John; I have seen more than one poor boat, with its crew, perish there, in the herring season."

"Look, look, my lady! There is *another* vessel—a brig, I take her to be—running right into the firth before the wind."

The speakers were Winifred Lady Rohallion and her husband's bailie or factor, who stood together at a window of the castle of Rohallion, which crowns the summit of the headland before mentioned, and from whence, as it is a hundred and fifty feet in height, and rises almost sheer from the water, a spacious view can be obtained of the noble firth of Clyde, there expanding into a vast ocean, though apparently almost landlocked by the grassy hills and dales of Cunninghame, the princely Isle of Bute (the cradle of the House of Stuart), the blue and rocky peaks of Arran, the grey ridges of Kintyre; and far away, like a blue stripe that bounds the Scottish sea, the dim and distant shores of Ireland.

A few heavy rain-drops, precursors of a torrent, plashed on the window-panes, and with a swiftness almost tropical, great masses of cloud came rolling across the darkening sky. Under their lower edges, lurid streaks between the hill-tops marked the approach of sunset, and thunder began to grumble overhead, as it came from the splintered peaks of Arran, to die away among the woody highlands of Carrick.

Aware that when the tide turned there would be a tremendous swell, with a sea that would roll far inshore, the fishermen in the little bay near the castled rock were all busily at work, drawing their brown-tarred and sharp-prowed boats far up on the beach, for there was a moaning in the sea and rising wind that foretold a tempestuous night: thus, they as well as the inhabitants of Rohallion Castle were at a loss to understand *why* the strange brig, instead of running right up the firth in search of safe anchorage under some of the high land, strove to beat to windward.

The conclusion therefore came to was, that she was French, or that her crew were ignorant of the river navigation; there were no pilots then so far down the firth, and when the fishermen spoke among themselves of running down to her assistance or guidance, they muttered of French gun-brigs, of letters of marque, and

privateers—shrugged their shoulders, and stood pipe in mouth under the lee of the little rocky pier to watch the event.

At the drawing-room windows of the more modern portion of the old stronghold of Rohallion, the lady of that name, and her bailie, stood watching the ship, by the dim light of the darkening afternoon.

Lady Winifred was a woman of a style, or rather of a school, that has passed away for ever out of Scotland.

Tall and stately, but gentle, homely, and motherly withal, her quaint formality was tempered by an old-fashioned politeness, that put all at their ease.

Now though verging on her fiftieth year, she was still very handsome, albeit where dimples once laughed, the wrinkles were appearing now. She had been an Edinburgh belle in those days when the tone of society there was very stately and aristocratic; when the city was the winter resort of the solid rank and real talent of the land; when it was a small and spirited capital instead of a huge "deserted village," abandoned to the soothing influences of the church, the law, sabbatarianism, and the east wind.

Her lofty carriage and old-fashioned courtesey reminded one of what is described of the ladies of Queen Anne's time: she possessed a singular sweetness in her smile, and every motion, even of her smooth, white hands, though perfectly natural, seemed studies of artistic grace. Her eyes were dark and keen; her features straight and noble; her complexion brilliantly fair. Though powder had been wisely discarded by her Majesty, the Queen Consort, and the six Princesses, their doing so was no rule for Lady Rohallion, who was somewhat of a potentate in Carrick, and still wore her hair in that singular half-dishevelled fashion, full and flowing, as we may see it depicted in Sir Joshua's famous portrait of her, which is to be hung on the walls of the Scottish National Gallery, when cleared of some of their local rubbish.

Thus, the white powder which she retained in profusion, formed a singular but not unpleasing contrast to her black eyebrows, black eyes, and long dark lashes—silky fringes, from which, some five-and-twenty years before, she had shot more than one perriwigged sub, who had come unscathed from the dangers of Bunker's-hill and Brandywine.

On the present occasion, her visitor, who bore the somewhat unaristocratic name of Mr. John Girvan, or, at times, Girvanmains, was a short, thickset, weatherbeaten man about sixty years of age, and in whom any one could have discerned at a glance the old soldier, by the erect way in which he carried his head. He wore an old military wig that had once been white, but was

quite unpowdered now and was bleached yellow; and he had a jolly, good-humoured face, rendered so red by exposure to the weather and by imbibing whisky-toddy, that, as he once said himself, "it might blow up a gunpowder magazine, if he came within a mile of it."

He had been the Quartermaster of Lord Rohallion's regiment, the 25th Foot, and after long service with it in America and elsewhere, had settled down on his colonel's estates in the capacity of land-steward, ground-bailie, and general factotum, and in this capacity had snug apartments assigned to him in a part of the old castle.

"While looking at yonder ship, my lady, you forget the letters I have brought you from Maybole," said he, producing a leathern pouch having the Rohallion arms stamped in brass on the outside; "the riding-postman, with the mail-bags, arrived just as I was leaving the Kirkwynd Tavern. Waes me! what a changed place that is now. Many a crown bowl of punch have poor Robbie Burns and I birlid there!"

"True, John, the letters; unlock the bag, and let me see what the news is from Maybole."

This ancient burgh-of-barony was the little capital of old bailiewick of Carrick.

Opening the pouch, Girvan tumbled on the table a number of letters and newspapers, such as the Edinburgh "Courant" and "Chronicle," which then were about a quarter of the size of the journals of the present day, and were printed on very grey paper, in such very brown ink, that they had quite a mediæval aspect.

The first letter Lady Winifred opened was from her chief friend and gossip, the Countess of Eglinton, with whom she had been at school, when she was simply Winifred Maxwell, and when the Countess was Eleanora Hamilton, of Bourtreehill. Her letter was somewhat sorrowful in its tenor:—

"I wish you would visit me, my dear friend," it ran; "Eglinton Castle is so dull now, so very *triste*! My good lord the earl (whom God preserve!) has been appointed Colonel of the Argyre Fencibles, one of the many kilted regiments now being raised, lest we are invaded by the French and their vile Corsican usurper; so he hath left me. My second boy, Roger, too, hath sailed lieutenant of a man-o'-war, and sorely do I opine that never mair shall my old hand stroke his golden curls again—my own brave bairn! (Her forebodings were sadly verified when, soon after, this favourite son died of fever at Jamaica.) I send you Mrs. Anne Radcliffe's novel, 'The Mysteries of Udolpho,' in five volumes, which I am sure will enchant you. I send you also the last book of the fashions, which I received by the London mail

three weeks ago. Carriage robes are to have long sleeves, and the jockey bonnets are trimmed with green feathers; white satin mantles trimmed with swansdown, of the *exile style*, are considered the most elegant wraps for the opera. You will see by the papers that our brave Lord Nelson hath been created Duke of Bronte, but returns from Naples with the odious woman Lady Hamilton. Tell Bailie Girvan ('Quartermaster,' I think he prefers) that I thank him for the hawslock-wool* he sent to Eglinton; my girls and I are spinning it with our own hands. Also I thank your sweet self for the lace mittens you knitted for me on Hallow-e'en. Your little friend—it may soon be ward—Miss Flora Warrender, is now with us, and seems to grow lovelier and livelier every day. I have Madame Rossignal, an *émigré*, the fashionable mistress of dancing, from Fyfe's Close, Edinburgh, with me just now, teaching my girls; but for a child of eight years, the little Warrender excels them both. Her father goes abroad in command of his regiment, and her poor mother is almost brokenhearted."

"If she is lonely at Eglinton, with her daughters the Ladies Jane and Lillias, how much more must I be, whose husband is absent, and whose only son is in the army!" exclaimed Lady Winifred.

"A letter from Rohallion himself!" said the old Quartermaster in an excited tone, handing to the lady a missive which bore her husband's seal and coronet.

"From him, and I read it *last*!" said she reproachfully, as she opened it.

It was dated from White's Coffee-house, in London, whither he had gone as a representative peer, and it contained only some news of the period, such as comments on Lord Castlereagh's or Mr. Pitt's speeches about the Irish Union; ("which is to be carried by English gold and guile, like our *own*," said the Quartermaster, parenthetically;) the hopes he had of getting command of a brigade in Sir Ralph Abercrombie's proposed Egyptian expedition; he related that their son Cosmo, the master of Rohallion, then serving with the Guards, was well, and stood high in favour with the Prince of Wales.

"A doubtful compliment, if all tales be true," commented Lady Winifred.

"If Rohallion goes on service, I'll never stay at home behind him," exclaimed old Girvan; "it would ill become me."

"*All* the Highland regiments in Great Britain, second battalions as well as first, are under orders for immediate foreign service," continued his lordship's letter; "this looks like work, Winny dear, does it not?"

* The finest wool, being the locks that grow on the throat.

He added that parliament was to be prorogued in a day or two, and that he would return by sea in one of the Leith smacks, which were then large and heavy passenger cutters, of some two hundred tons or so; they were all armed with carronades, and as their crews were secured from the pressgangs, they manfully fought their own way, without convoy, with the old Scots flag at their mast-head.

"He comes home by sea," said Lady Rohallion aloud, glancing nervously at the offing, where the coast of Ireland had disappeared, and where the clouds were gathering black and rapidly.

"By sea!" repeated Girvan.

"Now, the Lord forbid, at this season of the year!"

"And when so many French and Spanish privateers infest the seas, led by fellows who, in daring, surpass even Commodore Fall or Paul Jones," exclaimed Girvan.

As if to echo or confirm their fears, a booming sound pealed from a distance over the sea.

"What noise is that?" asked Lady Rohallion, starting up, while her pale cheek grew paler still.

"A gun—a cannon shot to seaward!" exclaimed the old soldier, pricking up his ears, while his eyes sparkled on recognising the once too familiar sound.

"'Tis that vessel in distress," said Lady Rohallion, as they hurried once more to the windows which overlooked the sea. "Away to the clachan, John; get all our people together, and have the boats launched."

"That will be impossible with such a heavy sea coming rolling in, my lady—clean impossible!" replied the other, as he threw up a window and levelled a telescope at the vessel, while the wild blast against which she was struggling made the damask curtains stream like banners, and frizzed up, like a mop, the Quartermaster's old yellow wig.

"What do you see, John? Speak, Girvanmains!"

"There go her colours; but I can't make them out."

"Twenty guineas a man to all who will aid her!" exclaimed Lady Rohallion, taking a key from her gold chatelaine, and hurrying to a buhl escritoire, while gun after gun pealed from a distance over the stormy sea; but they came from *two* vessels, one of which was hidden in a bank of dusky vapour.

The lady grasped the old Quartermaster's arm, and her white hands trembled nervously as she exclaimed in a whisper—

"Oh, my God, John Girvan! what if Rohallion should be on board of *her*, with a foe on one hand and a lee shore on the other?"

CHAPTER II.

THE PARTAN CRAIG.

"Prone on the midnight surge with panting breath.
They cry for aid, and long contend with death;
High o'er their heads the rolling billows sweep,
And down they sink in everlasting sleep.
Bereft of power to help, their comrades see
The wretched victims die beneath the lee!"

FALCONER's *Shipwreck*.

INSPIRED by fears, perhaps, similar to those of his lady, the Quartermaster made no immediate reply, but continued to watch with deep interest, and somewhat of a professional eye, the red flashes which broke from the bosom of that gloomy bank of cloud, which seemed to rest upon the surface of the water, about six miles distant.

The wind was still blowing a gale from the seaward. Through the fast-flying masses of black and torn vapour, the setting sun, for a few minutes shed a lurid glare—it almost seemed a baleful glow along the crested waves, reddening their frothy tops, and lighting up, as if with crimson flames, the wet canvas of the brig; but lo! at the same instant, there shot out of the vapour, and into the ruddy sheen of the stormy sunset, *another* square-rigged craft, a brig of larger size, whose guns were fired with man-o'-war-like precision and rapidity.

The first vessel, the same which for so many hours had been working close-hauled in long tacks to beat off the lee shore, now relinquished the attempt, and, squaring her yards, hoisting her topsails from the cap, stood straight towards Rohallion, her crew evidently expecting some military protection from the castle on the rock, or deeming it better to run bump ashore, with all its risks, than be taken by the enemy.

The fugitive was snow-rigged, a merchant brig apparently by her deep bends, bluff bows, and somewhat clumsy top and hamper; the British colours were displayed at her gaff peak. The other was a smart gun-brig or privateer with the tricolour of France floating at her gaff, and a long whiplike pennant streaming ahead of her, as she fired her bow chasers. Twice luffing round, she let fly some of her broadside guns, and once she discharged a large pivot cannon from amidships, in her efforts to cripple the fugitive. But as both vessels were plunging heavily in a tempestuous sea, the shot only passed through the fore and main courses of the merchantman, and

were seen to ricochet along the waves' tops ahead, ere they sunk amid tiny waterspouts to the bottom. Thus the violence of the gale rendered the cannonading of the Frenchman nearly futile.

Neglected, or ill-protected at times by war-ship and batteries, as the whole Scottish coast was during the war against France, such episodes as this were of frequent occurrence. There was no cruiser in the vicinity, so the flight and pursuit in the offing went on interrupted, notwithstanding the fury of the gale, which was increasing every moment.

Although our fleets successfully blockaded the great military ports of France, in the beginning of the war, her privateers infested all the broad and narrow seas, and frequently made dashes inshore. Only seventeen years before the period of our story, the *Fearnought*, of Dunkirk, cannonaded Arbroath with red-hot shot; and much about the same time, the notorious renegade Paul Jones kept all the Scottish seaboard in alarm with his fleet.

Now the wild blast that tore round the sea-beaten cliff on which the castle stood, increased in fury; the waves grew whiter as the lurid sun went down, enveloped in clouds; the sky grew darker and the guns flashed redder, as they broke through the murky atmosphere, while their reports were brought by the wind, sharply and distinctly, to the ears of those who so anxiously looked on.

"Oh, if Rohallion should be there!" exclaimed Lady Winifred, wringing her hands again and again.

"This will never do!" exclaimed the old Quartermaster, wrathfully; "a Frenchman in the very mouth o' the Clyde and dinging a Scottish ship in that fashion! I must fire a gun, and get the volunteers to man the battery."

Suddenly the sails of the merchantman were seen to shiver, and she seemed in danger of losing her masts, for a shot had carried away her rudder, and consequently she became unmanageable!

Both vessels were now so near the land, that the Frenchman probably became alarmed for his own safety; so changing his course, he braced his yards sharp up, and beating to windward, speedily disappeared into the gloom from which he had so suddenly emerged, and was seen no more; but the unfortunate victim of his hostility drifted fast away before the wind, partly broadside on, towards that lee and rocky shore.

"She will be foul o' the Partan Craig, so sure as my name is John Girvan!" exclaimed the Quartermaster.

"There is death in the air, Girvanmains," added Lady Rohallion, in a low voice that was full of deep emotion; "I

heard the moan of the sea and wind—the deep sough of coming trouble—in the coves below the house this morning, and I never knew the omen fail—oh, look there—*all is over!*” she exclaimed with a shudder, as the drifting vessel struck with a crash, they seemed to hear, on the long white ridge of the Partan Craig.

For a moment her masts were seen to sway from port to starboard, then away they went to leeward, a mass of entangled ruin, rigging, yards, and sails, as she became a complete wreck bulged upon the reef, with the roaring sea making tremendous breaches over her, washing boats, booms, bulwarks, and everything from her deck; and thus she lay, helpless and abandoned to the elemental war, within a mile of the shore.

By the naked eye, but more particularly by means of a telescope, the crew could be seen making frantic signals to those on shore, or lashing themselves to the timber heads and the stumps of the masts; and near her bows there was a man bearing in his arms a child, whom he sought to shield from the waves that every moment swept over the whole ship.

“A father and his child,” exclaimed Lady Rohallion, in deep commiseration; “oh, my God, the poor things will perish! I will give a hundred guineas to have them saved.”

“The national debt wouldn’t do it,” replied the old Quartermaster, grimly, with something in his throat between a sob and a sigh.

In those days there were no lifeboats, no rocket apparatus to succour the shipwrecked, and in such a wild night of storm and tempest—for now the chill November eve had deepened into night—the hardy fishermen, who alone could have ventured forth to aid the drowning crew, thought and spoke of their wives and little ones, whose bread depended on their exertions and on the safety of their clinker-built boats, now drawn high and dry upon the beach; and thus compelled by prudence to remain inactive, they remained with their weather-beaten faces turned stolidly seaward to watch the helpless wreck.

That those who were thereon did not despair of succour from the shore was evident, for on the stump of their mainmast the red glaring light of a tar-barrel was soon seen burning to indicate where they were, for as the darkness increased, even the snow-white foam that boiled over the Partan Craig became invisible.

Then the fishermen’s wives wrung their hands, and exclaimed in chorus—

“The puir man wi’ his bairn—oh, the puir man wi’ his bairn! God save and sain them!”

Flaring steadily like a great torch, the light of the blazing

barrel shed a weird gloom upon the wreck, and defied for a time even the seas that swept her to extinguish it, while the heart-rending cries of the poor fellows who were lashed to the timber-heads and belaying pins, were brought to the listeners' ears, from time to time, on the stormy gusts of wind.

To add to the wildness of the scene, the sea-birds, disturbed in their eyries among the rocks by the cries, the recent firing, and the blazing barrel now came forth, and the spotted guillemot (or sea-turtle), the red-throated northern douker, the ravenous gull, and the wild screaming mew went swooping about in flocks on the blast.

A loud and despairing cry that was echoed by all on shore arose from the wreck, as the fire-barrel was extinguished by one tremendous breaker; and now local knowledge alone could indicate the place where the bulged ship was perishing amid the gloom. Soon after this, the cries for succour ceased, and as large pieces of timber, planking, bulwarks, spars, and masts were dashed upon the pier and rocks by the furious sea, it was rightly conjectured that she had gone to pieces, and that all was at an end now, with her and her crew.

Accompanied by the village dominie, Symon Skaill, a party of fishermen, farm labourers and servants from the castle, Mr. John Girvan, with a shawl tied over his hat and yellow wig, searched the whole beach around the little bay that was overshadowed and sheltered by the castle-rock, and the coves or caverns that yawned in it, hoping that some poor wretch might be cast ashore with life enough remaining to tell the story of his ship; but they searched long and vainly. Pieces of wreck, cordage, torn sails, broken spars and blocks alone were left by the reflux of the waves, and the flaring of the searchers' torches on the gusty wind, as seen from the Castle of Rohallion, made them seem like wandering spirits, or something certainly uncanny and weird to the eyes of Lady Winifred.

So the night wore on, the storm continued unabated; heavily the rain began to lash the sea-beat rocks and castle walls; louder than ever roared the wind in the caves below, and more fiercely boiled the breakers over the Partan Craig, as if the warring elements were rejoicing in their strength, and in the destruction they had achieved.

Wet, wearied, breathless, and longing particularly for a glass of that steaming whisky-toddy, which they knew awaited them in the castle, the dominie and the quartermaster, whose flam beaux were both nearly burned out, just as they were about to ascend a narrow path that wound upward from the beach, heard simultaneously a sound like a wild gasping sob—a half-stifled cry of despair and exhaustion—from the seaward. Shouting

lustily for assistance, they gathered some of the stragglers, and by the united glare of their torches, upheld at arm's length, they beheld a sight that roused their tenderest sympathies.

Struggling with that wild sea, whose waves were still rolling inshore, about twenty feet from where the spectators stood, a man's head could be seen amid the white surf, bobbing like a fisher's float, as he swam, combating nobly with the waves, but with one hand and arm only; the other hand and arm sustained a *child*, who seemed already dead or partially drowned.

"Oh, weelawa, it was na for nocht that the sealghs were yowling on the Partan Craig yestreen!" cried Elsie Irvine, a stout and comely matron; but from that haunt the seals have long since been scared by the river steamers.

"Oh, the bairn—save the bairn—the pair wee lammie—the pair wee doo!" chorussed the women, whose maternal instincts were keenly excited, and led by Elsie's husband, several men rushed into the water, grasping each other hand-in-hand to stem alike the flow and backwash of the waves; but paralysed now by past exhaustion and by the extreme cold of the sea and atmosphere, the poor man, who was clad in a light green frock, laced with gold, could do no more to save either himself or his burden; and thus lay floating passively on the surface, drawn deep into the black trough one moment, and tossed upon the white froth of a wave-summit the next, but always far beyond the reach of those who sought to rescue him and his boy, and wild and ghastly seemed his face, when, at times, it could be seen by the light of the upheld torches.

Uttering a short, sharp cry of exhaustion and despair, he suddenly seemed to stand, or rise erect in the water; then he cast the child towards the beach, threw up his hands as if human nature could endure no more, and sank—sank within twenty feet of where the spectators stood.

Irvine, the fisherman, cleverly caught hold of the child, which a wave fortunately threw towards him, and the little fellow, senseless, cold and breathless, was borne away in the plump, sturdy arms of his wife, to be stripped, put in a warm bed, and restored, if possible, to heat and animation.

Great exertions were meanwhile made, but made in vain, to rescue the body of his father, for it was never doubted that such was his relationship by those who witnessed his severe struggles, his love, and his despair.

The storm was passing away; wet, weary, and very much "out of sorts" by their unwonted exertions, the quartermaster and the village dominie, a thickset, sturdy old fellow, clad in rusty black, with a tie perriwig and square buckled shoes, a

very wrinkled and somewhat careworn face, arrived at the Castle to make their report to Lady Rohallion, who had anxiously awaited the events of the night.

With that love of the marvellous and the morbid peculiar to their class, her servants had every few minutes brought intelligence of the number of corpses, gashed and mangled, which strewed the beach; of treasures and rich stuffs which came ashore from the wreck, and so forth; but, by reading her letters and other occupations, she had striven to wean herself from thinking too much of the terrors that reigned without, though every gust of wind that howled round the old tower brought to mind the bulged ship, and made her sigh for the absence of her husband and son, both far away from her; and now starting up, she listened to the narrative of Dominie Skail and his gossip, Mr. Girvan.

"Ugh!" concluded the latter; "I've never had such a soaking since I tumbled into the Weser, in heavy marching order, the night before Minden; and drowned I should have been, but for the ready hand of Rohallion."

"But this child you speak of—where is it?" asked Lady Winifred.

"Wi' auld Elsie Irvine, down by the coves, my lady," replied the dominie, with one of his most respectful bows.

"The poor little think is alive, then?"

"Yes—alive, warm, and sleeping cosily in Elsie's breast by this time—cosily as ever bairn o' her ain did."

"Bring this child to me in the morning, dominie—you will see to it?"

"Yes, my lady."

"A boy, you say it is?"

"Yes."

"And what is he like, John Girvan?"

"Just like other bairns, my lady."

"How?"

"With yellow hair and a nose above his chin," replied the quartermaster, wiping the water out of his neck and wig.

"A bonnie golden-haired bairnie as ever you saw, Lady Rohallion," replied the dominie, with a glistening eye, for he had a kinder heart for children than the old bachelor Girvan; "and he minded me much of your ladyship's son, the master, when about the same size or age."

"And this poor child is the sole survivor of the wreck?"

"So far as we can learn, the sole—the only one!"

"Heaven help us! this is very sad!" exclaimed the lady, while her eyes filled with tears. "Many a mother will have a

sore heart after this storm, and more than one widow may weep for a husband drowned."

"Ay, madam, in warring wi' the elements, we feel ourselves what the Epicureans of old dreamed they were—scarcely the creation of a benevolent Being, so helpless and infirm is man when opposed to them."

"Bother the Epicureans, whoever they were; wring the water out of your wig, dominie," said the quartermaster.

"Any bodies that come ashore must be noted, examined, and buried with due reverence."

"Yes, my lady," replied the dominie; "we'll have to see the minister and the sheriff anent this matter."

"Dominie, the butler will attend to you and Mr. Girvan. You are quite wet, so lose no time in getting your clothes changed; and bring me in the morning this little waif of the ocean, whom I quite long to see. Until we discover his parentage, he shall be my peculiar care."

"That shall I do, my lady, joyfully," replied the dominie, bowing very low; "and that you will be unto him all that the daughter of Pharaoh was to the little waif she found in the ark of bulrushes, I doubt not."

"Now, dominie," said the quartermaster, testily, "grog first—Exodus after."

"I have the honour to wish your ladyship a very good night; and we shall drink to your health a glass for every letter of your name, like the Romans of old, as we find in Tibullus and Martial," said the solemn dominie, retiring and making three profound bows in reply to Lady Rohallion's stately courtesy.

"Good night, dominie. You, Girvanmains, will tell me the last news in the morning."

The old quartermaster made his most respectful military obeisance as he withdrew, on receiving this patronymic; for though he had begun life in the ranks of the 25th, or old Edinburgh regiment, like every Scot he had a pedigree, and claimed a descent from the Girvans of Girvanmains and Dalmorton, an old Ayrshire stock, who were always adherents of the Crawfords of Rohallion, either for good or for evil, especially in their feuds with the Kennedies of Colzean; and thus he was disposed to be more than usually suave, when the lady addressed him as "Girvanmains," or more kindly and simple as "John Girvan," a familiarity which won entirely the heart of the worthy old soldier, for he had followed her husband to many a battle and siege, and, under his eye and orders, had expended many a thousand round of John Bull's ball ammunition in the Seven Years' War and in the fruitless strife with our colonists in America.

CHAPTER III.

THE CASTLE OF ROHALLION.

"Hast thou seen that lordly castle,
 That castle by the sea?
 Golden and red above it
 The clouds float gorgeously.
 And fain it would swoop downward
 To the mirrored wave below;
 And fain it would soar upward
 In the evening's crimson glow."—LONGFELLOW.

THE baronial fortalice in which our story has opened stands, as we have stated, upon a cliff, at least one hundred and fifty feet in height above the ocean, or where the estuary of the Clyde widens thereunto, on the Carrick shore; but since 1798 it has undergone many alterations, not perhaps for the better.

In that year it consisted of the old Scottish Keep, built in the reign of James I. by Sir Ranulph Crawford, of Rohallion, his ambassador, first to Henry VI. of England, and afterwards to Charles VII. of France, for which services he was created Keeper of the Royal Palace of Carrick. Adjoining this grim tower, with its grated windows, machicolated ramparts, and corner tourelles, was the more modern mansion built in the time of James VI., by Hugh, third Lord Rohallion, who slew the gipsy king in single combat at the Cairns of Blackhinney. It had crowstepped gables, dormer windows, gabled and carved with dates, crests, and quaint monograms, and many a huge chimney, conical turret, and creaking vane, added to its picturesque appearance. To this was added a wing in the time of Queen Anne, somewhat unsightly in its details, yet the general aspect of the whole edifice was bold and pleasing, chastened or toned down as it was by time and the elements.

On one side it overlooked the firth, then opening to a stormy sea, with the ruins of Turnberry in the distance—the crumbling walls wherein the conqueror of the proud Plantagenet first saw the light, and learned "to shake his Carrick spear." On the other, its windows opened to the most fertile portion of the bailiwick—wooded heights that looked on the banks and braes of the Doon, where the scenery wakened a flood of historical or legendary memories; where every broomy knove and grassy hill, every coppice and rushy glen, grey lichened rock and stony eorrie, were consecrated by some old song or stirring tale of love or local war—the fierce old feudal wars of the Kennedies,

the Crawfords, and the grim iron Barons of Auchindrane; and, more than all, it was the birthplace, the home of Robert Bruce and of Robert Burns—the one the warrior, and the other the bard of the people. From the windows of Rohallion could be seen the very uplands, where, but a few years before, the latter had ploughed and sown, and where, as he tells us in his filial love of his native soil, when he saw

“The rough burr-thistle spreading wide,
Among the bearded bear;
I turned the weeding-hook aside,
And spread the emblem dear!”

The scenery from whence he drew his inspiration looked down on the old tower of Rohallion, which contained on its first floor the stone-paved hall, that had witnessed many a bridal feast and Christmas festival, held in the rough old joyous times, when Scotland was true to herself, and ere sour Judaical sabbatarianism came upon her, to make religion a curse and a cloak for the deepest hypocrisy; and ere her preachers sought “to merit heaven, by making earth a hell.”

It presented the unusual feature (in a baronial edifice) of a groined roof, having at least six elaborately carved Gothic bosses, where the ribs that sprang from beautiful corbels placed between the windows intersected each other. On the frieze of the high-arched fireplace was a shield *gules*, with a fess *ermine*, the old arms of the Crawfords, Lords of Crawford, in Clydesdale (a family ancient as the days of William the Lyon), from whom the peers of Rohallion—whose patent was signed by James IV. on the night before Flodden—took their bearings and motto, *Endure Furth!* Though, certainly, it was but little they were ever disposed to endure with patience, if displeased with either king or commoner.

Stags' skulls, antlers, a few old barred helmets, dinted corslets, rusty swords and pikes, decorated this great stone apartment. Its furniture was massive and ancient, but seldom used now, so there the busy spiders spun their webs all undisturbed, across the grated windows, and the moss grew in winter on the carved jambs of the great fireplace, within which, according to tradition, for ages before these days of unbelief, the little red brownie of Rohallion was wont to come o' nights when all were abed, and warm himself by the smouldering *grieshock*.

Lady Rohallion preferred the more modern rooms of Queen Anne's reign, where the buhl and marqueterie furniture was more to her taste.

There, the double drawing-room with its yellow damask curtains, high-backed chairs and couches, its old bandy-legged

tabourettes, slender guéridon work-tables; its old-fashioned piano, with perhaps "H.R.H. the Duke of York's Grand March" on the music-frame; its Delft-lined fireplace and basket-grate set on a square block of stone, a spinning-wheel on one side, and cosy elbow-chair, brilliant with brass nails, on the other, was the beau-ideal of comfort, especially on a tempestuous night, such as the last we have described; nor was it destitute of splendour, for its lofty panelled walls exhibited some fine pictures. There were some gems by Greuze, of golden-haired boys and fair full-bosomed women in brilliant colours; one or two ruddily-tinted saints by Murillo; one or two dark Titians, and darker Vandikes representing Italian nobles of cut-throat aspect, in gilt armour, with trunk breeches and high ruffs. Then there were also some of the Scottish school; the Lord Rohallion (who opposed the surrender of Charles I. to the English) by Jameson; his son, a vehement opposer of the Union, attired in a huge wig and collarless red coat, by Aikman; and the father of the present lord, by Allen Ramsay, son of the poet.

This lord in 1708, left his country in disgust, swearing that "she was only fit for the Presbyterian slaves who sold her;" and for several years he solaced himself at the head of a Muscovite regiment against the Turks on the banks of the Danube—as the Scots whigs had it, "learning to eat raw horse and forget God's kirk, among barbarians in red breeks."

Near the castle, and forming indeed a portion of it, was a platform, facing the little sandy bay, where the fishing boats were beached, and thereon were mounted twelve iron twenty-four pounders, part of the spoil of *La Bonne Citoyenne*, a French privateer, which was cast away on the Partan Craig; and there, as the old lord and representative peer (whose wife is awaiting him) still retained his military instincts, being a retired general officer, he had all the able-bodied men of his tenantry drilled to the use of sponge and rammer as artillerymen, for rumours of invasion were rife; gunboats were being built at Boulogne, and those who then looked across the Straits of Dover, could see the white tents of the Armée d'Angleterre, under the Irish soldier of fortune, Kilmaine, covering all the hostile shore of France. So all Britain was bristling with bayonets; from Cape Wrath to the Land's End in Cornwall, every man that could handle a musket was a volunteer, if not otherwise enrolled in the line, militia, or Fencibles.

On this battery the flag was hoisted and a salute loyally and joyously fired every 4th of June, in honour of his Majesty George III., by the Rohallion volunteers; and there with loud hurrahs they drank confusion to France and to his enemies, Tom

Paine, the Pope, and the Devil, and very frequently in the best French brandy, which somehow found its way quite as often as our good Farintosh or Campbelton whisky, duty free, into the sea coves beneath the castle rock.

These twelve twenty-four pounders protected the approach to the bay on one side, and to the gate of the castle on the other—the haunted gate of Rohallion, as it was named, from the circumstance that there the old village dominie, Symon Skail, when going home one morning (night he affirmed it to be) in midsummer, after topering with Mr. John Girvan, saw a very startling sight. Clearly defined in the calm, still twilight of the morning, there stood by the gate the tall and handsome figure of John, Master of Rohallion, who was known to be then serving with the Foot Guards under Cornwallis, in America. He wore his scarlet regimentals, his brigadier wig, his long, straight sword, and little three-cocked hat; but his face was pale, distorted by agony, and blood was flowing from a wound in his left temple.

Ere the affrighted dominie could speak, the figure—the *wraith*—melted into the twilight, and not a trace of it remained by the arched gate, where the birds were twittering about in the early morning. A note was made of this singular vision, and it was found that at that hour, the Master of Rohallion had been shot through the head, when leading on his company of the Guards at the attack on Long Island.

Such, in 1798, was the old Scottish mansion of Rohallion, the residence of Reynold, sixth lord of that ilk, which, by the events of the last night's storm, has become the starting-place, or, as the quartermaster might phrase it, the *point d'appui*, of our story.

CHAPTER IV.

THE CHILD OF THE SEA.

"'Tis gone—the storm has past,
'Twas but a bitter hail shower, and the sun
Laughs out again within the tranquil blue.
Henceforth, Firmilian, thou art safe with me."—AYTOUN.

To the eyes of those who surveyed the beach beneath the castle walls next morning, a lamentable spectacle was displayed. The wreck upon the Partan Craig had been completely torn to pieces by the fury of the waves, and now shattered masts and yards, blocks and rigging, casks, bales, planks and other pieces of worn and frayed timber were left high and dry among the shells and

shingle by the receding tide, or were dashed into smaller fragments by the surf that beat against the castle rock.

Several dead bodies were also cast ashore, sodden with the brine, and partly covered with sand; and, though all had been but a short time in the water, some were sadly mutilated by having been dashed repeatedly against the sharp and abutting rocks of Rohallion, by the furious sea last night.

All looked placid and calm, and by the position of their limbs, nearly all seemed to have been drowned in the act of swimming. By a portion of the sternboard that came on shore, the vessel's name appeared to have been the *Louise*; but of what port, or from where, remained unknown, for, save the little child, there remained no tongue or record to tell the story of that doomed ship, or the dreadful secrets of that eventful night.

The mutterings of the fishermen and the lamentations of the women of the little hamlet, were loud and impressive as they rambled along the beach, drawing the dead aside to remain in a boat-shed till that great local authority, the parish minister, arrived. Everything that came drifting ashore from the wreck was drawn far up the sand, lest the returning tide should wash it off again.

There were no Lloyds' agents or other officials in the neighbourhood of Rohallion, so each man made a lawful prize of whatever he could lay hands upon and convey to his cottage. The people at work close by relinquished plough and harrow, and harnessed their horses to the masts and booms for conveyance through the fields. Others brought carts to carry off the plunder; and thus, long before mid-day, not a trace remained of the shattered ship, save the pale dead men, who lay side by side under an old sail in the boat-shed; but for many a night after this, Elsie Irvine and others averred that they could see the pale blue *corpse-lights* dancing on the sea about the Partan Craig, to indicate where other men lay drowned, uncoffined, and unprayed for.

Among other bodies discovered on the beach next morning was that of a man in whom, by his costume—a light green frock, laced with gold—all recognised the father, or supposed father, of the little boy he had striven so bravely to save, and whom all had seen perish by the light of their torches.

The poor man was lying among the seaweed, stark and stiff, and half covered with sand, within a few yards of the cottage where his little boy, all unconscious of his loss, of the past and of the future, lay peacefully asleep in Elsie Irvine's bed.

And now the quartermaster and Dominie Skail, who had given his schoolboys a holiday, in honour of the excitement

and the event, arrived at the scene of operations, with Lady Rohallion's orders that the child should be brought to her.

Old John Girvan looked at the corpse attentively.

"This poor fellow has been a soldier," said he; "I can perceive that, by a glance. Lift him gently into the shed, lads, though it's all one to him how he's handled now!"

The corpse seemed to be that of a tall, well-formed, and fine-looking, dark-complexioned man in the prime of life; his dark brown hair, from which the white powder had all been washed away, was already becoming grizzled, and was neatly tied in a queue by a blue silk ribbon. In the breast-pocket of his coat, there were found a purse containing a few French coins of the Republic, but of small value, and a plated metal case, in which were some papers uninjured by the water. On the third finger of his left hand was a signet ring on which the name "Josephine" was engraved; so with these relics (while the body was placed with the rest in the boat-shed) John Girvan and the dominie, accompanied by Elsie, bearing the child, repaired to the presence of Lady Rohallion, who received them all in her little breakfast-parlour, the deeply embayed and arched windows of which showed that it had been the bower-chamber of her predecessors, in the feudal days of the old castle.

"Come away, Elsie, and show me your darling prize!" she exclaimed, as she hurried forward and held out her hand to the fisherman's wife, for there was a singular combination of friendly and old-fashioned grace in all she did.

"There is no a bonnier bairn, my leddy, nor a better, in a' the three Bailiwicks o' Kyle, Carrick, and Cunninghame," said Elsie, curtsying deeply, as she presented the child.

"Yes, madam," added the dominie; "the bairn is as perfect an Absalom as even the Book of Samuel describeth."

"But I dinna understand a word he says," resumed Elsie; "hear ye *that*, madam?"

"Ma mère, ma mère!" sobbed the child, a very beautiful dark-eyed, but golden-haired and red-cheeked little boy of some seven or eight years of age, as he looked from face to face in wonder and alarm.

"Faith! 'tis a little Frenchman," said the dominie.

"A Frenchman!" exclaimed Elsie, placing the child somewhat precipitately on Lady Rohallion's knee, and retiring a pace or two. "I thocht sae, by his queer jargon of broken English, wi' a smattering o' Scots words too; but French folk speak nae Christian tongue. Maybe the bairn's a spy—a son, wha kens, o' Robespierre or Bonaparte himsel!"

"Elsie, how can you run on thus?"

"Ah, mon père—mon père!" said the child, sobbing.

"Hear till him again, my leddy," exclaimed Elsie; "the bairn can speak French—that coves a'!"

"He cries for his father—poor child—poor child!" said Lady Rohallion, whose eyes filled with tears.

"Father—yes, madame; my father—where is he?" said the boy, opening his fine large eyes wider with an expression of anxiety and fear, and speaking in a lisping but strongly foreign accent: "take me to him—take me to him, madame, if you please."

"The bairn speaks English well enough," said the dominie; "he'll hae had a French tutor, or some sic haverel, to teach him to play the fiddle, I warrant, and to quote Voltaire, Rousseau, and Helvetius, when he grows older."

"What is your name, my dear little boy?" asked Lady Rohallion, caressingly; but she had to repeat the question thrice, and in different modes, before the child, who eyed her with evident distrust, replied, timidly:

"Quentin Kennedy, madame."

"Kennedy!" exclaimed all.

"A gude auld Ayrshire name, ever since the days of Malcolm the Maiden!" said the quartermaster, striking his staff on the floor.

"Rohallion's mother was a Kennedy," said the lady, a tender smile spreading over her face as she surveyed the orphan, "so the bairn could not have fallen into better hands than ours."

"Indubitably not, my lady," chimed in the dominie; "nor could he find a sibber friend."

"And your father, my dear child—your father?" urged Lady Rohallion.

"My father—oh, my father is drowned! He went down into the sea with the big ship. Oh, ma mère! ma mère!" cried the little boy, in a sudden passion of grief, and seeking to escape from them, as the terrors of the past night, with a conviction of his present isolation and loneliness, seemed to come fully upon him.

"And your mamma, my little love?" asked the lady, endearingly.

"She is far away in France."

"Where—in what town?"

"Hélas, madame, I do not know."

He sobbed bitterly, and Lady Rohallion wept as she kissed and fondled, and strove to reassure him by those caresses which none but one who has been a mother can bestow; but sometimes he repelled her with his plump little hands, while his dark eyes would sparkle and dilate with surprise and alarm. Then he would ask for his father again and again, for the child knew

neither what death or drowning meant; and it was in vain they told him that his father had perished in the sea. He could not understand them, and to have shown the child the poor pale, sodden corpse that lay in the boat-shed on the shore would have been a useless cruelty that must have added to his grief and terror.

Lady Rohallion, pointing upward as he sat on her knee, told him that his father was in heaven, and that in time he would meet him there; for, of such as he was, poor orphan, was the kingdom of heaven made; but in heaven or in the sea was all one for a time to little Quentin Kennedy, who wept bitterly, and noisily too, till he grew weary, or became consoled, by the winning ways of his gentle protectress, for, of course, the poor child knew not the nature of his awful loss and bereavement.

While the boy, although temporarily forgetful of his griefs, was stretched on the soft, warm hearth-rug before the fire that blazed in the parlour grate, and occupied himself with the gambols of a wiry Skye-terrier, John Girvan handed to Lady Rohallion the relics he had found on the drowned man.

"A ring!" said she; "this is painfully interesting; and it has an inscription."

"Yes, madame, it is like the *annuli* worn by the legionary tribunes in the Punic war," added Dominic Skail, who never lost an opportunity of "airing" his classics.

"It bears a crest; that speaks of gentle birth," said Lady Rohallion, who had a great veneration for that fortuitous circumstance. "And there is a name, *Josephine*."

"Mamma—ma mère!" exclaimed the child, starting and looking up at the, no doubt, familiar sound.

"His mother's name, I am sure; poor little fellow, he has heard his father call her so," said Lady Rohallion, as she opened the plated case and drew forth the documents it contained. One was on parchment, the other two were letters.

"A military commission—Girvanmains, look here!"

It was the commission of Quentin Kennedy, *gentilhomme Ecossais*, to be captain in the Royal Regiment of Scots, in the service of his Most Christian Majesty, and was signed by the unfortunate Louis XVI., as the date showed, in the year before his execution.

"So this poor drowned man has eaten his bread by tuck of drum!" exclaimed the old quartermaster, with a kindling eye, as he stooped to caress the orphan's golden curls. "Puir fellow—puir fellow! He has been a commissioned officer like myself, so I'll e'en turn out the Rohallion Volunteers, and he shall be borne to his grave as becomes a soldier, with muffled drums and arms reversed—eh, dominie?"

"Yes, and the spoils of war shall be cast on the pile, as we read in the eleventh book of the *Æneid*; and they shall march like the Thebans, striking their weapons one on another, to the sound of the trumpet—eh, quartermaster?"

"I'd baton the first lout I caught doing aught so unsteady or so unsoldierlike," was the indignant response.

"But how came this Scotsman to be serving the French King," asked the dominie; "as such was he not a renegade soldier, such as the Romans were wont to stab and leave unburied, as we find in Tacitus?"

"He had been in the foreign brigades, the Scottish and Irish," replied the lady. "One of these letters is from Monsieur the Comte d'Artois, and it praises the courage of the Scottish Captain Kennedy, of the Regiment de Berwick, in the campaigns upon the Meuse and Rhine. The other letter is from his poor wife, and is subscribed Josephine. Ah me, how sad! the name that is on the ring."

They spoke in low tones, as if loth to disturb the child, who was still playing with the terrier.

"What says it, my lady?" asked the dominie, "for though well versed in the dead languages, praised be Providence and the auld pedagogy of Glasgow, I know little of the living—French especially, the language of Voltaire, Diderot, and Helvetius—of democrats, levellers, revolutionists, and the slaves of the Corsican tyrant."

"The letter has no date, dominie," replied the lady, smiling at this outburst; "the cover also is wanting, but it runs thus."

Standing one on each side of her chair, each with a hand at his ear to listen, the two old men heard her translate with ease the following letter:—

"MY OWN DEAR, DEAR QUENTIN,—

"This is the last letter you will receive in France from your own Fifine. The next I shall address to you, as you may direct, to Scotland. Ah, mon Dieu! how sad—how terrible to think that we are to be separated, and at such a time! But madame my mother's illness pleads for me with all, and more than all with you, Quentin. You as a Scotchman and royalist officer, and our poor child, for the very blood it inherits from his mother, would be welcome victims to the shambles of the great Republic; for the first Consul B. and Citizen M., his secretary of state, would not spare even a child at this crisis, lest it should grow into an aristocrat and an enemy.* Every hour the hatred

* The initials no doubt refer to Bonaparte and the secretary Hugues Bernard Maret, who assisted so vigorously in the 18th Brumaire.

of Britain grows stronger here, and the mode in which we treat the prisoners taken in Flanders and elsewhere, makes my blood alternately glow and freeze, Frenchwoman though I am! But I have not forgotten the Place de la Grève, or the horrors of that day, when my father's blood moistened the sawdust of a scaffold, just wetted by the blood of Marie Antoinette.

"Enough of this, however, dear Quentin; 'tis safer to speak than to write of such things, though this letter goes by a safe and sure hand, our dear friend, the Abbé Lebrun, for in this land of spies the post is perilous. Destroy it, however, the moment you receive it, for we know not what mischief it might do us all, though the ship by which you sail, goes, you say, under cartel, and by the rules of war can neither be attacked nor taken.

"Rumour says that Monsieur Charles Philippe, the Comte d'Artois, is now with his suite at Holyrood, the old home of those Scottish kings with whom his fathers were allied; and that the ancient Garde du Corps Ecossais is to be re-established for him there. I pray God it may be so, as in that case, dearest, Monsieur will not forget you and your services on the Rhine and elsewhere, and your steady adherence to his family in those days of anarchy, impiety, and sin.

"Kiss our little cherub for me. I am in despair when I think of him, though he is safer with you than with me, in our dreadful France—no longer the land of beauty and gaiety, but of the bayonet and guillotine. He must be our hostage and peace-offering to your family, and I doubt not that his innocent smiles and golden curls may soften their hearts towards us both. La Mère de Dieu take you both into her blessed keeping and hasten our reunion. Till then, and for ever after, I am your own affectionate little wife,

"FIFINE."

This letter, we have said, was undated, but the postscript led Lady Rohallion to suppose it came from a remote part of France. It ran thus:

"Your own petted Fifine sends you a hundred kisses for every mile this has to travel; as many more to little Quentin, as they wont add a franc to the weight in the pocket of M. l'Abbé."

So ended this letter, so sad in its love and its tenor, under the circumstances. With that of the Comte d'Artois, the commission, purse, and ring, Lady Rohallion carefully put it past in her antique buhl escritoire, for her husband's inspection on his return; and, on leaving the castle, the old quartermaster kept his word.

True to his inbred military instincts and impulses, he had the

Rohallion company of Volunteers duly paraded, in their cocked hats, short swallow-tailed red coats, white leggings, and long black gaiters; and, with arms reversed, they bore the dead soldier of fortune, shoulder-high, from the old castle-gate, where the scarlet family standard, with its fess *ermine*, hung half-hoisted on the battery.

Mournfully from the leafless copse that clothed the steep sides of the narrow glen in which the old kirk stood, did the muffled drums re-echo, while the sweet low wail of the fifes sent up the sad notes of the dead march—"The Land o' the Leal."

At one of the drawing-room windows Lady Rohallion sat, with the child upon her knee—little Quentin Kennedy, our hero, for such he is; and her motherly heart was full, and her kindly tears fell fast on his golden hair, when three sharp volleys that rung in the clear cold air above a yawning grave, and the pale blue distant smoke that she could see wreathing in the November sunshine, announced the last scene of this little tragedy—that the poor drowned wanderer, the Scottish soldier of fortune, who adhered to King Louis in his downfall, had found a last home in his native earth; and that, *perhaps*, all his secrets, his sorrows, and the story of his life were buried with him.

Then with a burst of sympathy and womanly tenderness, she pressed her lips to the soft cheek of the child, whose eyes dilated with inquiry and wonder, as he heard those farewell volleys that rung in the distant air; but little knew that they were fired above his father's closing grave!

CHAPTER V.

THE PAST.

"Still shall unthinking man substantial deem
The forms that flit through life's deceitful dream,
Till at some stroke of Fate, the vision flies,
And sad realities in prospect rise;
And from Elysian slumbers rudely torn,
The startled soul awakes, to think and mourn."

BEATTIE'S *Elegy*, 1758.

SUCH is the buoyant thoughtlessness of childhood, that a few days sufficed to console, to soothe, and to reconcile the poor boy to his new friends and his new habitation. The kindness, tenderness, and attention of Lady Rohallion did much, if not all, to achieve this; and doubtless she would have succeeded very well in the same way with an older personage than little

Quentin Kennedy, for she fully possessed, together with great amiability and sweetness of disposition, those requisites which Sir William Temple affirmed to be the three great ingredients of pleasant conversation,—viz., good sense, good humour, and wit.

Secluded and retiring in her habits, simple and old-fashioned in her tastes, she preferred residing quietly among her husband's tenantry at Rohallion, to figuring, as had been her wont, in the great world of fashion, such as it was to be found in the London of old King George's days, or in the smaller circle of the Scottish metropolis; and even when parliamentary business compelled Lord Rohallion to proceed southward, he could scarcely prevail upon her to accompany him, for travelling was not then the swift and easy process we find it *now*, in these days of steam and railways.

Thus the advent of her little protégé was quite a boon to her, and while rapidly learning to love the child, who had a thousand winning and endearing ways, she relinquished all idea of attempting to discover his mother till the return of her husband, though the notion was scarcely conceived, when it was abandoned as simply impossible, from the want of a distinct clue as to her residence, and the existence of the bitter and revengeful war that had been waged between France and Britain for five years now, ever since the siege of Toulon. Consequently there seemed nothing for it, as Quartermaster Girvan said, but to make a good Scotsman of the little Frenchman (if French, indeed, he was)—and the dominie failed not to quote Cicero, "*anent the adoptio of the Romans.*"

So Lady Rohallion learned to love the child, and the child to love her with a regard that was quite filial; and his pretty prattle in broken English was her chief solace and amusement after the hours of attendance and *surveillance* she daily bestowed, like a good housewife and châtelaine of old, upon her household and her husband's tenantry; for there was not "a fishwife's bairn" in the hamlet below could be pilled or powdered for the measles or hooping-cough, without a due consultation being first held with my lady in the castle.

Sensation novels were then unknown, and Walter Scott was still in futurity, save as a translator of German ballads. Our respectable old friends, "Tom Jones," "Roderick Random," and "Peregrine Pickle," were still in the flush of their fame; but Lady Rohallion preferred the works of Mr. Richardson, and deemed the sorrows of *Clarissa Harlowe*, and of *Fielding's "Amelia,"* to be sorrows indeed.

Being Winifred Maxwell of the gallant but attainted House of Nithsdale, her Jacobite sympathies were keen and intense;

thus, ten years before the date of our story, she suffered a real grief, and had worn a suit of the deepest black, on tidings coming from Maybole that Prince Charles Edward, with whom her mother had flirted in Holyrood, and for whom her uncles had shed their blood on the fatal field of Culloden—that the Bonnie Prince Charlie of so many stirring memories, so many Scottish songs, and so many faithful hearts, an old, soured, and dissappointed man, had been gathered to his fathers, and was lying cold and dead in his tomb, beneath the dome of St. Peter.

Though she had somewhat strong ideas on the subject of keeping up “the old spirit of the Crawfords of Rohallion,” a good deal of which, we are sorry to say, meant looking down on their neighbours: and though she had an intense estimation for poor people of “that ilk,” and for coats, quarterings, and family claims, and that kind of blood which the Scots designated as *gude*, and the Spaniards as *blue*, she was weak enough, as Lady Eglinton phrased it, to treasure immensely a copy of very flattering verses, addressed to her in her beauty and girlhood, by a certain democratic Ayrshire ploughman, named Mr. Robert Burns, for whose memory she had a very great regard.

She was full of the proud and fiery ideas of a past and manly age, for she was old enough to remember when the beaus and bloods of Edinburgh in their periwigs and square-skirted coats of silk or velvet, squired her and Eleanora Eglinton up the old Assembly Close, with links flaring and swords flashing round their sedans, swearing, with such large oaths as were then fashionable, to whip through the lungs any scurvy fellow who loitered an instant in their way.

But the first years of the present century saw a new world closing round her, and innovations coming fast, though the old language in which our laws are written yet lingered in the pulpit and at the bar.

To her aristocratic ideas, and to those of her friends, it seemed as if the malign influence of the French revolution tainted the very air, especially in Scotland, where, by the tendency of their education and religion, the people are naturally democratic in spirit; and it was pretty apparent, that the decapitation of Robert Watt at Edinburgh, and the persecution of “Citizen Muir,” and his compatriots by the Government, in no way cooled the real ardour of the Friends of the People.

To Lady Winifred, it appeared also, that while, on one hand, the humbler classes were less genuinely affectionate and less deferential to the upper, on the other, they were less kindly and less courteous to each other. Everything seemed to be done in a hurry too, though the mail-coaches carrying four inside, usually

took a week or more in rumbling between Edinburgh and London with the varieties of an occasional break-down when fording a river, or receiving the contents of a robber's blunderbuss in a lonely part of the way.

Holidays were kept in a hearty old fashion, and there was no sour sabbatarianism to excite the wrath of the liberal-minded Scots, and the wonder and derision of their English neighbours. There were democrats and demagogues in every village, it is true; but patriotism, and a genuine British spirit rendered their revilings innocuous and all but useless.

Where now the dun deer rove in the desert glens, the Highland Clans existed in all their hardihood and numerical strength, to fill by thousands the ranks of our kilted regiments. The flags of "Duncan, Nelson, Keppel, Howe, and Jervis" were sweeping the sea. Beacons studded all the hills, and every village cross was the muster-place of volunteer corps; and there are yet those alive who remember the great night of the *false alarm* when it was supposed the French had landed, when the bale-fire on Hume Castle sent its blaze upon the midnight sky; when the alarm-drum, the long roll which a soldier never forgets, was beat in town and hamlet, and all Scotland stood to arms: and when the brave Liddesdale yeomanry swam the Liddle, then in full and roaring flood, every trooper riding with his sword in his teeth, as if to show that the old spirit yet lived upon the Borders, unchanged as in those days when the Lords Marchers blew their trumpets before the gates of Berwick or Carlisle.

And as it came to pass, it was in those stirring times of war and tumult—times not now very remote, good reader—that our little hero found a home in the old manor of Rohallion.

His mother sorrowed for him in sunny France beyond the sea, where she may never see him more, or know that he survived the wreck in which her husband perished; and now daily another received his morning kiss, and watched his footsteps and gambols; and nightly hushed him to sleep, smoothed the coverlet, caressed his ruddy cheeks and golden hair; yet that poor bereaved mother was never absent from the thoughts of good Lady Rohallion, who had now taken her place.

Of his many kisses and caresses, she felt that she was robbing that poor unknown, the affectionate "Fifine" of the dead man's letter; but how to find her, how to restore him, stultified and rendered every way impossible as all such attempts must be, by the war now waged by every sea and shore between the two countries?

Though little Quentin, we grieve to say, was gradually forgetting his own mother and learning to love his adopted one,

there were *times* when, nathless all Lady Rohallion's sweetness and tenderness, he felt that there was something lacking—something he missed ; he knew not what, unless it were that he longed

“ For the touch of a vanished hand
And the sound of a voice that is still.”

A fortnight had passed away since the letter of Lord Rohallion had been brought by John Girvan from Maybole, and still there were no further tidings of his return ; so the lady became sad and anxious, for she trembled at the idea of his returning by sea.

On one of the first nights of December, when the wind was moaning about the old walls of the castle, and the angry hiss of the sea was heard on the rocks below, she sat alone, by Quentin's little bed. He had just dropped asleep.

He occupied the same cot in which her own son Cosmo, Master of Rohallion, had been wont to sleep when a child about the same age. It was prettily gilt and surmounted by a coronet ; the curtains were drawn apart, and by the subdued light of a night-lamp she could see the pure profile and rosy cheeks of the boy, as he reposed on a soft white pillow, in the calm sleep of childhood.

She could almost imagine that her son Cosmo, the tall captain of the Guards, was again a child and sleeping there, or that she was a young wife again and not an old woman, and so, as thoughts that came unbidden poured fast upon her, she began to recal the years that had rolled away.

Then out of the thronging memories of the past, there arose a vision of a fair-haired and handsome young man—one who loved her well before Rohallion came—his younger brother ; and with this image came the memory of many a happy ramble long, long ago, in the green summer woods of pleasant Nithsdale, when the sunshine was declining on the heights of Queensberry, or casting shadows on the plains of Closeburn or the grassy pastoral uplands through which the blue stream winds to meet the Solway—and where the voices of the mavis, the merle, and the cushat-dove were heard in every coppice.

She thought of those sunset meetings, and of one who was wont to sit beside her then for hours, lost in love and happiness. Lady Rohallion loved her husband well and dearly ; but there were times when conscience upbraided her, and she pitied the memory of that younger brother whom she had deceived and deluded, and whom, like a thoughtless young coquette, she had permitted—it might be, lured—to love her.

In fancy she traced out what her path—a less splendid one, assuredly—might have been, had Rohallion not won her heart,

and most unwittingly broken his brother's, for so the people said. And thus, while "speculating on a future which was already a *past*," the handsome, the gallant, and earnest young Ranulph Crawford, the lover of her girlhood, rose before her in fancy, and her eyes grew moist as she thought of his fatal end, for he died, a self-made exile, an obscure soldier of fortune, in defence of the Tuileries, and the public papers had recorded the story of his fall—not in the flowery language of the present, but in the cold brevity of that time—"as one Captain Crawford, a Scot, whose zeal outran his discretion, who in charging the populace, was wounded, taken, and beheaded by them."

"Clarissa Harlowe" had fallen from her hand, and the mimic sorrows of the novel were forgotten in the real griefs of Lady Winifred's waking dream. From these, however, she was roused by the clatter of a horse's hoofs at the haunted gate beside the gun-battery, and almost immediately after a servant announced the glad tidings,

"My Lady Rohallion, his lordship has arrived!"

CHAPTER VI.

LORD ROHALLION.

"She gazed—she reddened like a rose—
 Syne pale as ony lily;
 She sank within my arms and cried,
 'Art thou my ain dear Willie?'
 'By Him who made yon sun and sky,
 By whom true love's regarded,
 I am the man!' and thus may still
 True lovers be rewarded."—BURNS.

HASTENING to the drawing-room, she immediately found herself in the arms of her husband, who was throwing off his drab-coloured riding coat, with its heavy cape, his small triangular Nivernois hat, boot-tops, and whip, to his favourite valet and constant attendant, old Jack Andrews.

Rohallion kissed his wife's hand and then her forehead, for he had not outlived either affection or respect, though verging on his fifty-fifth year; and he had all that gentleness of bearing and true politeness which the Scottish gentlemen of the old school, prior to, and long after the Union, acquired from our ancient allies, the French.

"And you returned from London——"

"By sea, Winny—by sea," said Rohallion.

"After all my entreaties!"

"Zounds! Winny, I can't abide the mail, and am too old to post it now, as my old friend Monboddo used to do yearly, to kiss the king's hand; and so preferred the 'Lord Nelson' smack, from London to Leith, armed with twelve carronades, and sailing without convoy."

"And the voyage was pleasant?"

"A head-wind, a fourteen days' run, and an exchange of shots with a French privateer off Flamborough Head. At Edinburgh I took the stage to Ayr, and from thence Andrews and I jogged quietly home on horseback."

Still a handsome man, though portly in person, as became his years, Reynold Crawford, Lord Rohallion, had features that were alike noble in character and striking in expression. The broad, square forehead indicated intelligence and candour, his mouth, good humour, and the form of his closely-shaved chin spoke of decision and perseverance. His nose was perhaps too large, but his eyes were dark grey, gentle and soft, usually, in expression. He wore his own hair, which was still thick and wavy, powdered as white as a cauliflower, and tied with a broad ribbon, having a double bow at the back.

He still adhered to the frilled shirt, and had a large pearl brooch in the breast thereof; his long waistcoat was of scarlet cloth, edged with silver; his coat of bright blue broadcloth, with large, flat steel buttons, had a high rolling collar, small cape, and enormous lapels. Hessian boots, with tassels of gold and spurs of steel, and tight buff pantaloons for riding, showed to advantage his stout, well turned limbs, and completed his costume. He had a ruddy complexion, a hearty laughing manner, and a jolly *brusquerie* about him that smacked more of the soldier, or the agriculturist, than the peer of the realm.

"And now, Rohallion, tell me about our Cosmo—how is he looking?"

"Twice as well as ever I did at the same age, and that is saying something—eh, Winny? Why he is the pattern man of the Household Brigade, but a strange boy withal. Duty about the Court has increased that cold hauteur which always marked his character. I don't know where the deuce he picked it up—not from you or me, Winny. But the butler says that an early supper is served——"

"Yes, dearest—in my little parlour."

"Egad! the snuggest billet in the house, and I can assure you that I am as well appetised as ever I used to be when a hungry ensign in Germany. Permit me, madam," said he, drawing her hand caressingly upon his arm; "and now tell me, how do you like the mode in which my hair is queued?"

"Why, Reynold?"

"'Tis a new fashion taught to Jack Andrews by old Hugh Hewson, of St. Martin-in-the-Fields—the Scotch hairdresser—you have heard of him, of course?"

"The original of Dr. Smollett's Hugh Strap—who has not?" said she, laughing; "well, his dressing is very smart! I see now, Andrews, his lordship looks quite a beau!"

"I *was*—or had the reputation of being so, when first I wore that gurglet at Minden, a boy of fifteen or thereabouts; and before I saw you, Winny, dear."

"I have a surprise for you——"

"Supper first, Winny, egad! I don't like surprises; we had enough of them in Holland, and they were not at all to our taste. Eh, Jack Andrews—do you remember our night march for Valenciennes?" he asked, turning to his old valet, who grinned an assent as he deposited a pair of silver-mounted holster pistols in a mahogany case. To Rohallion this veteran, Jack Andrews, was all that Corporal Trim was to Uncle Toby (both of whom, according to Sterne, had served in the 25th Foot, then known as Leven's Regiment), a servant, and at times friend and companion, and perpetual resort or reference on military matters. Long and hard service together, community of sentiment ~~in~~ ⁱⁿ ~~war~~ ^{war} matters, combined the sympathy of camaraderie with the steady faith of a Scottish servitor of the old school in Andrews, who was a sour-featured, thin, and erect old fellow, in a powdered wig (though, by the Act of 1795, hair powder cost a guinea per head), with a pigtail, and the family livery, grey faced with scarlet; and somehow on old Jack it always looked like a *uniform*.

Attended by this valet, both well mounted, and having holster pistols at their saddles, he had ridden from Ayr, through Maybole, and was now ready for supper, braced by the keen December blast, and feeling happy and jovial to find himself once more at home from London, which, so far as travelling and the ideas of the time are concerned, was then nearly as distant from the Scottish capital as Moscow is to-day; and a perfect picture they formed, that gentle, high-bred, and loving old couple in powdered hair, seated at supper, with their antique equipage, conversing in the plain old Scottish accent, which was still used, with a Doric word here and there, by the Scottish aristocracy.

"Andrews and I would have been here an hour earlier," said his lordship, slicing down a daintily-roasted capon, "but the old piper of Maybole, in the burgh livery, would play before us all the way through the town, and two miles beyond it, according to

use and wont—a glass of wine, Andrews—but Pate is growing old, Winny, now; he fairly broke down in playing ‘Lord Lennox March,’ so I think we must add something to his piper’s-croft and cow’s mailing. They scarcely keep the poor fellow, when meal, malt, and everything are at such prices. I had, moreover, to inspect the Maybole volunteers. I say, Andrews, did you see how they shouldered arms?”

“Ah, my lord; knocking all their fore-and-aft cocked hats off, as they canted their firelocks from right to left,” replied the valet, with a grim smile.

“Then we had to see an effigy of Tom Paine, burned in front of the Tolbooth, with a copy of the ‘Rights of Man,’ while we drank Confusion to the French, the Friends of the People, the National Convention, and Charles Fox. So you see, Winny, my time was fully occupied.”

The wax lights in the silver candelabra and crystal girandoles, and the fire that blazed in the polished brass grate, diffused a warm and ruddy glow through the cossy old-fashioned parlour, with its pink damask chairs and curtains; and speedily the old general dismissed his supper and glass of dry sherry.

Then, Andrews, as if according to use and wont, without requiring to be told, removed the decanters, and placed before his master the “three elements,” whisky, hot water, and sugar, and Rohallion, with ladle and jug, proceeded to make a jorum of hot steaming toddy.

“Now, Andrews, my man,” said he, “make a browst like this for yourself in the butler’s pantry, and then turn in; neither you nor I are so young as we have been, and you’ve had a long journey to-day. Good night. I require nothing more.”

Andrews gave a military salute, wheeled round, as if on a pivot, so that his pigtail described a horizontal circle, and withdrew.

“Now, what is the surprise you have for me, Winny?” asked Rohallion, as he filled her ladyship’s glass, a long one, with a white worm in its stem.

“Tell me first the news from London.”

“Well, gudewife Winny, nobody speaks of anything but this expedition to Egypt, and the expected surrender of Malta. Then if all goes right, ere long General Abercrombie will have about 15,000 men with him in the Bay of Marmorice.”

“I am so glad our Cosmo did not think of going on foreign service.”

“Why?”

“Can you ask me, Reynold—our only son?”

“I had been ten times under fire before I was half his age.

He was most anxious to go, and I wished him too; but, as the staff appointments were all filled up, and his battalion of the Guards will soon be detailed for service, I thought it a pity that the boy should lose his regimental rank."

"Cosmo will be twenty-five on his next birthday," said Lady Rohallion, thoughtfully, a remark probably suggested by the term "boy;" "our only son, Rohallion; we must indeed be careful of him."

"Careful of a strapping Guardsman like Cosmo!"

"There are times—when—when——"

"What, Winny?"

"I regret his having gone into the army at all."

"Odds my heart! then he would be the first Crawford of Rohallion that ever was out of it. His battalion may soon go to Ireland; the people there are more than ever discontented with the proposed union, and hope that the First Consul, the upstart Bonaparte, may enable them to cut a better figure than they and their allies under Humbert did at Ballnamuck last summer. I don't think the Horse Guards used me well in refusing me a brigade for service; so I don't return to London for some time, having paired off with our friend Eglinton, who is to put himself at the head of his Fencibles."

"Oh, I am so happy to hear this!" exclaimed Lady Winifred, clasping her plump white hands, the rings on which sparkled through her black lace mittens.

"Despite all I could urge, my old comrade, Jack Warrender of Ardgour, goes to Egypt in command of the Corsican Rangers."

"So Lady Eglinton wrote to me."

"And if he is knocked on the head,—which God forbid!—his daughter, Flora, will be long under trust, so her estate will be a fair one; and now, Winny, when I add that Mr. Fox and the Opposition are having their hair dressed *à la Brutus*, in imitation of the Parisian rabble, you have all my news."

"And now for mine," said she, with a delightful smile.

"Your surprise?"

"Yes—but you must come with me."

"Where?"

"To the nursery."

"That which was once the nursery, you mean."

"And which has become so *again*," she replied, laughing at his bewilderment.

Passing her arm through his, she led him to the sleeping-room, which adjoined their own, and desired him to look into Cosmo's little cot. Rohallion did so, and great indeed was his surprise

to find a beautiful little boy, whose hair, all golden and curly, and whose form of face, rich bloom, and long dark eyelashes, powerfully reminded him of what Cosmo had been at the same age, when sleeping in the same chamber and in the same cot.

"Zounds, Winifred, what in the world does this mean?" said he, with a droll expression twinkling in his dark grey eyes; "whose little fellow is this? Not *ours*, certainly; you can't have been stealing a march on me now-a-days."

"'Tis a long story and a sad one; but return with me to the parlour, and I shall tell you all about it," she replied, while selecting the key of her escritoire from the huge, housewife-like bunch that glittered at her *chatelaine*.

"Egad, then I'll brew another jug of punch the while; and now, Winny, I am all attention."

She related all that the reader knows: the storm on that gloomy November night; the attack made by the armed Frenchman, and the consequent flight of the British ship; her wreck on the Partan Craig and the loss of the crew, with the recovery of the child from a state of insensibility, and the burial of his father, by the ground bailie, John Girvan.

"My worthy old quartermaster did right—'twas like my good comrade!" said Lord Rohallion, while his eyes glistened; "I can imagine I see him marching up the glen at the head of the funeral party, erect as ever he marched under fire—a trifle more, maybe. The old Borderer did just what I should have done myself!"

Lady Winifred now laid before her husband the ring, the purse with its few franc pieces, and the papers of the drowned stranger, and all of these he examined with interest and commiseration, for he was a kind, generous, and warm-hearted man.

"This is sad—very sad, indeed!" he muttered.

"By the handwriting, Rohallion, and by the crest on the ring——"

"A lily, stalked and leaved, rising from a coronet."

"Yes."

"Well, Winny?"

"I should say they must have been people of figure and fashion—of good quality, at least."

"An old-fashioned phrase that, and going out now, like our fathers' swords and our mothers' hoops; call them aristocrats—eh, Winny?"

"Undoubtedly, and under suspicion, too, by the tenor of the poor lady's letter."

"'Josephine,'" said he, reading the inscription upon the ring: "why, that is the name of the widow Beauharnais, who three

or four years ago married the First Consul to escape the guillotine! You must preserve these relics with care, Winny; and as for the poor bairn, Rohallion must be his home till we find his mother, a task very unlikely to be accomplished, if ever at all, in these times, when France is at war with all the world, and her scaffolds are drenched daily with the blood of women, children, and priests, as well as of brave and loyal gentlemen. But into no better hands than ours, Winny, could this poor waif of misfortune have fallen. He is the child of a faithful royalist soldier, too—we must always remember that.”

Like his worthy wife, Lord Rohallion inherited with his blood a strong dash of Jacobitism, thus his sympathies were all with the humbled royalty of France.

The worthy old Defender of the Faith, who muddled away his time at Windsor, and his son, the “first gentleman in Europe,” who spent his days and nights less reputably in his Pavilion at Brighton—Thackeray’s man of waistcoats, wigs, and uniforms—had perhaps no truer servant than Major-General Reynold Lord Rohallion, K.C.B., &c. Yet among the “Stuart Papers,” which, in 1807, found their way into the royal archives, there was discovered a correspondence between a certain peer whose initial was R. and “His Majesty Henry II. of Scotland and IX. of England,” which rather excited the surprise of the ministry and privy council; but like the same secret correspondence of many other nobles of both kingdoms, it was deemed only wise and charitable to commit it to oblivion, for the grave had closed over the good old Cardinal Duke of York—the last of the Stuarts—and a few knew why, for a year and a day, the hilt of Rohallion’s sword was covered by a band of crape.

CHAPTER VII.

OUR STORY PROGRESSES.

“Here he dwelt in state and bounty,
Lord of Burleigh fair and free;
Not a lord in all the county,
Is so great a lord as he.”—TENNYSON.

KIND old Rohallion was deeply interested in and attracted by the little boy, who had many winning and endearing ways about him; and he particularly excelled in a bright and captivating smile, that was joyous in its perfect innocence.

He seated him on his knee at the breakfast-table in the library,

and strove, by all the art he was master of, to draw from him some clue, as to the part of France in which his mother resided, but save a knowledge of his own name, Quentin's recollections were few prior to the terror he had experienced on the wreck. All beyond that seemed vague, and his reminiscences were an odd jumble of a large town with a cathedral where his mamma took him to hear Abbé Lebrun preach or say mass—good Abbé Lebrun, who always gave him *bon-bons*, and wore such large spectacles. Then there was a river with boats, a bridge and a great mountain with a windmill, where he used to go with his nurse when she visited the miller.

Then, there was a Chanoinesse who gave him painted toys; there were some wicked soldiers, who burned a street and dragged away all the people to die, and of these same soldiers he had a peculiar dread and aversion. But whether they were ugly toys, or actors in some scene the child had witnessed, Rohallion could not tell; he supposed the affair referred to was some grim reality incident to the late revolution. He could gather nothing more that afforded a clue; and now as these memories were awakened in him, the faces of *others* came with them; tears filled the child's fine dark eyes; and he entreated piteously to have his mother brought to him and his nurse Nanette, or have his father brought to him out of the sea; and thus perceiving that nothing of certainty or value could be gleaned from him, his protectors tacitly agreed to let the subject drop.

Breakfast was just over when Andrews announced Quartermaster Girvan and Dominie Skaill, two individuals, who are perhaps bores in their way, but are nevertheless necessary to us in the course of this narrative.

They had heard of his lordship's arrival, and had "come to pay their dutiful reverence," for something of the old feudal sentiment lingered yet in Carrick, and a journey to Calcutta is a mere joke or pleasure trip now, when compared with how the Scots of 1798 viewed one to London, few prudent people attempting it without previously making a will, and settling all their earthly affairs.

"Welcome, Girvan, and welcome, dominie," said Rohallion, shaking each by the hand cordially; "I am glad to be at home again among you."

"Yea," replied the dominie, while rubbing one hand over the other, and smiling blandly, as perhaps his scholars seldom saw him smile; "your lordship has come back like Cincinnatus after the defeat of the Volci and the Æqui, to plough turnips and plant gude kail on haugh and rig—so welcome hame to Carrick, my lord."

The dominie had on his Sunday coat, with its huge flapped pockets; his best three-cornered hat, bound with black braid, was under his arm, and his square shoe-buckles shone like silver.

"And our little Frenchman has become quite a friend with your lordship, I see," said Girvan, patting the child on the head.

"Quite—a splendid little fellow he is!"

"But call him not a Frenchman," said the dominie, "when he bears the good auld Carrick name of Kennedy."

"Aye, dominie; it used to find an echo hereabout, in the old trooping and tramping times," replied Girvan.

"And has so still," added Rohallion, laughing; "for I am half a Kennedy, and often have I heard my mother sing—

"Twixt Wigton and the town of Ayr,
Portpatrick and the Cruives of Creë,
Nae man may hope in peace to bide,
Unless he court Saint Kennedy."

"Like the Maxwells in Nithsdale, the Kennedies had all their own way in those days," said Lady Winifred, as she drew off her lace mittens, and prepared to adjust her ivory-mounted spinning-wheel.

"But to return to the present time, tell me, John Girvan, did that French ship actually come within range of our gun-battery?"

"Yes, my lord—or nearly so."

"And what were *you* about, John, to stand with your hands in your pockets at such a time? Egad, 'twas not like an old 25th man?"

The quartermaster reddened.

"There was a tremendous gale from the seaward," said Lady Rohallion, coming to his assistance; "a storm—a tempest——"

"And she came only within a mile of the Partan Craig, where the unfortunate merchantman was in sore peril—a foe on one side, a lee shore on the other—eh, dominie?"

" '*Here Scylla bellows from her dire abodes,
Tremendous port—abhorred by men and gods,
And there Charybdis,*'

as old Homer hath it," replied the dominie, promptly.

"Even had the battery been manned, my lord, I am doubtful—I am doubtful if these old twenty-four pounders would pitch shot so far; and she scarcely appeared, before she hauled her wind and disappeared into the mist," said Girvan, giving his old yellow wig an angry twist.

"Some of these small crafts are growing very saucy," said Lord Rohallion, to change the subject, which he saw was distasteful to his old comrade. "It was only the other day that a lieutenant with fourteen men from one of our gun-brigs landed

on the coast of France to distribute royal manifestoes of the Comte d'Artois, dated from Holyrood, but he and his men were taken by a party of dragoons who surrounded an *auberge* in which they were imprudently drinking. They were instantly hanged as spies, by order of General Monnet, and the bodies are to be seen on fifteen gibbets, a mile apart, along the coast between Boulogne and Cape Grisnez.

"Poor men! How horrible!" exclaimed lady Winifred.

"Such barbarities were not committed in our time, my lord, except among the Indians."

"Quartermaster—but we are getting old fellows now," said Rohallion, with something between a laugh and a sigh. "We have often stopped the march of the French with fixed bayonets, but we can't arrest the march of *time*."

"Aye, aye, my lord," said the old soldier, warming, and answering a friendly smile from old Jack Andrews, who was removing the breakfast equipage; "but, when at Minden, and while the French gun brigade was bowling through the six British regiments that stood there in division, we little thought that we would live to drink our grog in Rohallion, forty years after, hale carles, and hearty ones, too."

"If we ever *thought* at all, Girvan, which is not likely; reflection troubles a young soldier seldom, and, egad! we were beardless boys then."

"And those who were boys like ourselves then, and those who were grey-haired grenadiers of Fontenoy and Culloden—who had no need to powder their white hair—were alike mowed down together, and lay like herrings in a landing net," said Girvan, sadly.

"It was a day on which the ripe fruit and the blossom were gathered together," said Lady Rohallion, as her wheel revolved rapidly, and little Quentin sat at her feet to watch it.

"Your ladyship's speech savoureth of poetry," said the dominie, bowing; "it is even as my old friend Burns—puir Robbie Burns—would have expressed himself."

"It is ten years since the Scots Horse Guards were amalgamated with the new Life Guard Regiments," said Rohallion, commencing a familiar topic.

"Just twelve years this summer, my lord," replied Girvan.

"And though moving slowly up the list of generals, Girvan, I have not had a regiment since."

"Among the Romans——" began the dominie.

"A regiment! it is a brigade you should have," interrupted the quartermaster, ruthlessly.

"Among the Romans," began the dominie again, when Lord Rohallion, who was full of his grievance (was there ever an old soldier without one?) spoke with something of irritation.

"I have actually been refused a brigade for service, though senior to more favoured officers; but a time may come when Government may be glad to avail themselves of my services, though I am afraid, John, that I'm getting owre auld in the horn, as the drovers say. Besides, they think that we old fellows of Minden and Bunker's Hill are as much out of date as the snap-muskets and matchlocks of King William's time. And zounds, man! there are not wanting in the Lower House certain disloyal spirits, termed financial reformers, who grudged the old soldier the day's pittance which he has won by blood and sweat, and by wasting the flower of his days among the swamps of the Helder, the fevers of the West Indies, and elsewhere."

"The devil take all fevers and reformers together—amen," said the quartermaster; "but I believe this intended Egyptian business will be only a flash in the pan when compared with what we have seen."

"Among the Romans the soldiery at first received no *stipendium*," said the dominie, raising his voice and speaking very fast, lest he should be interrupted; "but every man served at his own proper charges."

"That would suit our modern whigs to a hair, dominie," said Lord Rohallion, laughing.

"Yea, even to the vinegar which he mixed with spring water as his daily drink, did he furnish all, in the early days of the Roman army."

"Vinegar grog!" exclaimed the quartermaster with disgust; "Heaven be thanked I was not born a Roman. Such beggarly tipples would never have suited the 25th. And now, my lord, when you are at leisure, I wish to show you a new farm-steading I have erected at the Cairns of Blackhinney, and also how bravely the young trees are thriving in the oakwood shaw."

"Glad to hear the latter, Girvan, for I agree with my worthy friend, Admiral Collingwood, that every British proprietor should plant as many oak trees as he can, to keep up our navy. 'I wish everybody,' said he, in one of his letters, 'thought on this subject as I do, they would not walk through their farms without a pocketful of acorns to drop in the hedges, and let them take their chance,' and so keep up the future wooden walls of old England."

Neither Rohallion nor the gallant old Admiral could foresee the days when those famous "wooden walls," would be represented by screw propellers, armour clads, cupola ships, and steam rams!

Rohallion assumed his walking cane and Nivernois hat, to which he still adhered, though it had been long out of fashion, and had the flaps fastened up to its shallow crown by hooks and

eyes; and, bowing ceremoniously, left the dominie to confer with the lady concerning the course of study on which little Quentin Kennedy was soon to enter, while he issued forth with his old comrade the factor to look over the estate.

Close by the haunted gate lay a fine old beech, on which a cavalier Lord of Rohallion hanged as a traitor one of his vassals whom he discovered serving as a soldier in an English regiment. It now lay prostrate, for the storm had torn it up by the roots.

"Have this removed as soon as possible, Girvan," said the old lord; "for, ugh! I never see a fallen tree, but I think of that devilish abattis we fell into at Saratoga, when the Yankees would have made an end of me, had it not been for Jack Andrews and others of the 25th."

"Aye, my lord, and some of the 17th Light Dragoons too—under Corporal O'Lavery—you remember him?"

"Who could ever forget him that served there—who could ever forget him or his story?" exclaimed the old general flourishing his silver-headed cane; "not I, certainly. It was he who was entrusted by my Lord Rawdon as a military courier (*estafette*, the French term it), to bring me an important despatch concerning the movements of the regiment, and this despatch the Yankees were determined I should not receive, for spies had informed them of the bearer and his route, so the way was beset by riflemen. The soldier who accompanied him fell mortally wounded; O'Lavery was riddled by bullets too, yet he rode manfully on, until from loss of blood he fell from his saddle. Then Girvan, resolved that the important paper which he bore should never fall into the hands of the Yankees, he crumpled it up and thrust it into one of *his wounds*. I discovered it, when next morning we came upon him dying in the bush, and he had just life sufficient left to point to the fatal place where Rawdon's letter was concealed.* As one of our greatest orators said, when Martius Curtius to sacrifice himself for his country leaped into the gulf of the forum, he had all Rome for his spectators; but the poor Irish corporal was alone in the midst of a desert—I quote at random, quartermaster. And yet, after all the brave deeds and service of those days, to refuse me this brigade for service—zounds! it was too bad—too bad!"

But Rohallion survived his disappointment, and the two following years glided peacefully away, at his old castle in Carrick.

* "The surgeon declared the wound itself not to be mortal; but rendered so by the insertion of the despatch. Corporal O'Lavery was a native of the county of Down, where a monument, the gratitude of his countryman and commander Lord Rawdon, records his fame."—*Records of the 17th Lancers*.

CHAPTER VIII.

QUENTIN'S CHILDHOOD.

"Ah, happy time! ah, happy time!
 The days of mirth and dream;
 When years ring out their merry chime,
 And hope and gladness gleam.
 Then how we drink the storied page,
 In boyhood's happy home:
 The marvels of the wondrous age
 Of old Imperial Rome."—*All the Year Round*.

THE New Year's day of 1801 passed over at Rohallion amid feasting and revelling, for in the good old fashion the worthy lord, as his fathers had done before him, entertained all his people in the great hall of the tower. There the trophies were hung with green holly and scarlet berries; there the Yule log still smouldered on the hearth, and there he shook the powder from his hair, while footing it merrily with the wives and daughters of the fishers and cottars, while old Girvan hobbled away in his brigadier wig, the dominie screwing up his fiddle to discourse sweet music with the piper of Maybole, while as an interlude came the drums and fifes of the Rohallion Volunteers, to make the old castle ring to the cheering sounds of "Lady Jean o' Rohallion's Rant;" and this hearty homeliness, together with a free distribution of gifts on "auld handsel Monday," made the lord and lady of the manor adored by their tenantry. On that day there was something for every one: to the dominie a snuff-mull, which he received with many bows, reminding the donor how "Tacitus affirmed that Tiberius prohibited the bestowal of new year gifts, which was a great saving of expense to the knights and senators." To the quartermaster a gilt-bound "Army List," to keep him in reading and reference for the ensuing year; to Elsie at the coves a lace-curchie, and to little Quentin a gallant rocking-horse. So all danced the new year in hand-in-hand, to the old song,—

"Now Yule has come and Yule has gane,
 And we hae feasted weel!
 Sae Jock maun to his flail again,
 And Jenny to her wheel."

In the ensuing spring, when fresh flowers and budding leaves came to "deck the dead season's bier;" when the aroma of fertility, warmth, and verdure came from the sunny upland slopes, and the

mountain burns, as they bore brown leaves along, seemed to brawl louder over their stony beds towards the Firth of Clyde; when greener tints spread over the pastoral hills and glens about Rohallion; when the sky, long chilled by the frost of the past winter, had a richer tone and colour; when the air was warm and pleasant as it fanned the new-turned sods—when this sweet season came, we say, the old lord had ceased to lament having been refused a brigade in the expedition to Egypt.

By that time he had heard of the fall of his old friend and brother officer, the gallant Sir Ralph Abercrombie, and how war and disease had thinned the ranks of his army. He sorrowed for this: but his old spirit blazed up anew when he heard of how the 28th or Gloucestershire Slashers, in the Temple of the Sun, faced their rear rank about when surrounded, and defended themselves like a double wall of fire; how the Gordon Highlanders, at the bayonet's point, carried the cannon of the foe at the Tower of Mandora; how the Black Watch destroyed the boasted Invincibles, and won their scarlet plumes; and how the shrill pipes of the Highland Brigade rang in fierce defiance along the embattled heights of Nicopolis!

One name in the list of casualties made him start.

It was that of his old friend and neighbour, Colonel John Warrender of Ardgour, who fell, sword in hand, when leading the Corsican Rangers to a victorious bayonet charge against the 61st Demi-brigade.

"Oh, what a heart-stroke this is for his poor wife, Winny!" he exclaimed.

"And Flora—poor little Flora, their daughter," added Lady Rohallion, with her eyes full of tears.

"She is too young to know fully the calamity that has befallen her. Order the carriage, Andrews; we'll drive up the glen to Ardgour in an hour after this."

"Poor Mrs. Warrender!—she did so love her husband, and had sore misgivings that they were parting for the last time."

"A sad morning this will be for her, indeed!" said Lord Rohallion, laying the gazette upon the breakfast-table and gazing into the clear, bright fire, full of thought, as the battle of Alexandria seemed to come in fancy before his practised eye.

"Now Rohallion, bethink you, if circumstances had been reversed," said she, laying a hand caressingly on his neck, "and if she had been reading *your* name in that paper, what my feelings would have been."

"The carriage would be ordered at Ardgour instead of Rohallion," said the old lord, with an affectionate smile; "they may need me yet—but egad! I am *now*, perhaps, better pleased that the brigade was refused me. Warrender gone—poor Jack!"

and Abercrombie, too—I knew him when in command of the 69th.”

“He died on board the flagship, my lord,” said Andrews, who, in virtue of his years and peculiar position, ventured to gratify his irrepressible curiosity, by taking up the paper, to skim it at his master’s back; “they landed and formed line in the water, bayonets fixed and colours flying,” he continued, with a nervous voice and kindling eye; “28th and 42nd—Foot Guards and Royal Scots—I think I see them all—whoop! d—n it—why weren’t *we* there?—I beg pardon, my lady,” he added, in some confusion, as he proceeded in haste to remove the breakfast equipage, stumping vigorously on his left leg—in which he received a bullet at Saratoga—as he hurried away to order the carriage for the proposed visit of condolence, to which we need not invite the reader.

The treaty of Amiens which followed soon after the Egyptian campaign brought about a peace for fourteen months, and during that time, Lord Rohallion wrote repeatedly to our Ambassador at Paris concerning the little protégé who had now found a home in Carrick; but at a period when all the powers of Europe were only, as it were, taking breath and gathering strength for a greater and more deadly contest, such a trivial matter as the fate of a shipwrecked boy could gain but little attention. His lordship’s letters remained unanswered, and by the 18th of May, 1803, Britain and France again drew the sword, which was never to be sheathed save on the plains of Waterloo.

Time had made little Quentin as thoroughly at home in the castle and with the family of Rohallion, as if he had been born there.

The absence of her son with the Guards (Carlton House and the Pavilion at Brighton were decidedly more amusing than that old castle by the sea), created a void in Lady Rohallion’s heart; so the strange child came just in time to fill it, and she loved him tenderly and fondly. The old lord was never weary of chatting and playing with Quentin; and he was the especial pet and occasionally tormentor of the quartermaster, grey-haired Jack Andrews, and of old Dominie Skaill, who had been long since inducted to the honourable post of tutor, and as such, after his scholastic duties were over, he daily visited the castle, in which a room was set apart for study.

The following years saw Quentin Kennedy growing up into a fine and manly boy, bold in spirit and frank in nature; yet he retained even after his tenth year much of the chubby bloom, the rosy cheeks, the plump white skin, and the golden curls of his infancy.

Lady Rohallion and her visitors thought him a perfect Cupid; but her husband and the quartermaster—particularly the latter—

vowed he was a regular imp, who always broke his tobacco-pipes, tied explosives to the end of his pigtail, and played him a hundred other tricks, the result of Jack Andrews' secret education.

The dominie often shook his bag-wig solemnly, for the boy's ways were at times very erratic and required reprehension; but his constant friend and adherent was Lady Rohallion, who, when beholding his beauty, his gambols, and grace, or when listening to his prattle, and watching all his waggish little ways, could never think but with a sigh of the widowed and unknown mother whom all these would have gladdened, and who was, perhaps, still sorrowing for the child who had forgotten her and transferred his filial love and faith to a stranger—if, indeed, the royalist sympathies of that unfortunate mother had not been long since expiated under the guillotine.

Quentin's only annoyance existed when the Master of Rohallion, then a captain in the Guards, came home on leave, which, sooth to say, the Honourable Cosmo Crawford did as seldom as possible, the gaieties of London, club-life, the opera, and the atmosphere which surrounded the Prince of Wales, proving greater attractions than any to be found among the Highlands of Carrick. On these occasions, the boy felt sensibly how secondary a place he bore in the affections of the lady, and clung more to his friend the quartermaster.

In addition to a cold and chilling stateliness of manner, the master—a handsome and gallant soldier, however—disliked children generally, and half-grown boys in particular; thus if he ever spoke to Quentin, it was merely to quiz him as a young Frenchman (a nationality which the boy angrily repudiated), to call him a frog-eater, or little Bouey, a name which, through some childish memory of the past, always roused his anger.

The master was not popular in Carrick; on his home visits, the piper of Maybole never ventured to play before *him* as before his father; no mendicant held forth his hand in hope of charity when he passed the kirk-stile on Sunday; the tenantry never gathered to welcome him back, and he had been heard to speak of a recently deceased prince as “the late Pretender,” a horrible heresy in the house of Rohallion, and almost a solecism in Scottish society yet.

But our young friend was always relieved of his presence when the shooting season was over, when the summer drills of the Guards began, or when urgent letters from great but unknown friends required his return to London; and whither he departed with baggage enough for a regiment, and his English valet, whose finery, foppery, and town airs always excited the risible

faculties of Lord Rohallion, and the grim contempt of the cynical veteran, Jack Andrews.

Though bright and intelligent, Quentin was too erratic to be an industrious or plodding scholar; thus his Euclid and Cornelius Nepos, &c., were frequently left to themselves, that he might act the "truant," and have a day's fly-fishing in the Girvan or the winding Doon: or a ramble with his friend the gamekeeper through the preserves, where the deer came out of the fir woods to steal the dominie's turnips, and where the dark plover and the golden pheasant lurked among the sombre whin or feathery bracken bushes.

Then the "Life of Valentine and Orson," with the achievements of gallant Jack, the foe of all giants, together with similar ancient lore, in which the ex-quartermaster indulged him (generally about the time when his poor half-pay became due), together with the pungent military yarns of Jack Andrews, always proved sad opponents to the ponderous classics of Dominic Skail; and as Quentin grew older, Cornelius Nepos, Tacitus, Æschylus, and others, were alike neglected, and frequently neither entreaties nor threats would substitute them for the pages of Smollett and Fielding—the Dickens and Thackeray of the preceding age.

Then the dominie would grow wrathful; but all without avail, for the boy was droll and loveable in his ways, and as the old lord said, "would wind them all round his little finger." Thus in the oddly-assorted society of that sequestered castle he picked up a strange smattering of knowledge on many subjects.

Sometimes he was present when Lord Rohallion and John Girvan had long consultations concerning farming and stock management, arable and pastoral; planting belts of pine for sheltering corn and deer; draining bogs and swamps; embanking or reclaiming; thatching farm-towns anew, and so forth—consultations which always ended in a jorum of hot toddy, and a reference to the war and chances of invasion, which naturally led to a mental parade of his Majesty's 25th Foot, and old personal reminiscences, varying from the days of Minden down to Saratoga, Bunker's Hill, and Brandywine, with Corporal O'Lavery of the 17th, and Lord Rawdon's famous despatch. *Then* agriculture and its patron, the Baronet of Ulbter, were voted a double bore, and everything gave place to "shop" and pipe-clay.

At other times Quentin was present when curious arguments ensued over a pipe and glass of grog between his preceptor and the ruddy-visaged quartermaster, who was wont to treat the ancients and their modes of warfare with supreme contempt. Thus, if he extolled Brown Bess and her bayonet, which the French could never withstand, Dominic Skail brought the Par-

thians into the field, and told him how at close quarters with the Roman Legion they were broken : but how the troops of Crassus broke those same legions in turn, by the dexterity with which they used their bows, never failing to wind up with a reference to the Caledonian warriors who routed the Romans in the days of old, and the schiltrons or massed spearmen of Wight Wallace in later times, for the dominie had all the history of Harry the Minstrel by heart, and like the quartermaster, his patriotism had been no way lessened by many a jovial night spent with their friend Burns in his old farm-house of Lochlea or Mossiel.

Thus Quentin's mind became gradually imbued by quaint ideas and filled with a curious mixture of military, legendary, and historic lore. The very air he breathed was full of patriotism, for he was in the land of Burns—in Carrick, the ancient lordship of the kingly Bruces; and many a story the dominie told him of the times when the Earls of Cassilis, the Lords of Rohallion, the Lairds of Blairquhan, and other noblesse of Carrick, had their town mansions in Maybole; when love was made through barred helmets, and when there were hunting, and hosting and foraying; when castles were stormed and granges burned; when the Black Vault of Dunure saw Danish blood stream from its gutters after Largs was won; and the Abbot of Corseregal roasting on an iron grille ten years after the Reformation. But the story that Quentin loved best was of the Gipsy King who lured away the fair Countess Cassilis, and of the long years of captivity she spent in the grim old tower of Maybole, where to this day we may see the likenesses of herself and her rash lover, carved in stone upon the upper oriel.

Many a day they spent together, this patient dominie and his playful pupil, wandering among the ruins of the Castle of Kilhenzie, in feudal times a stronghold of the Kennedies, and there for hours they were wont to sit, under the aged and giant tree which still stands near its southern wall—a tree twenty-two feet in girth, and so vast that it covers nearly the eighth of an acre.

"On that tree many a bold reiver, gipsy loon, and landlouping Southron has been hung in his boots by the auld Kennedies o' Kilhenzie," the dominie would say; "they were a dour, stern, and warlike stock, boasting themselves to be kean-na-tigh, or, as the name bears, 'head of the race;' and who can say, Quentin, but *you* may be their lineal descendant, and if every head wears its ain bonnet, be Laird of Kilhenzie yet? yea, restored to your proper estate after all your wanderings, even as Telemachus was, who in childhood was also saved miraculously from the sea."

Then the boy would look up to the ivy-covered masses of the crumbling wall, with its gaping windows, through which the

gleds' and hoodie-crows were flying, and feel strange throbbings and emotions wakened in his heart by the dominie's words; and there he often came alone to loiter, and think and dream over what his friend had said, till his musings took a tangible form, and ultimately, in all his day-dreams, he came to identify the old castle with *himself*—he knew not why.

When Quentin was brought first to Rohallion, he was wont to pray to his "blessed Mother who was in heaven," and to lisp the name of "la Mère de Dieu" with great reverence, to the utter scandal and bewilderment of Dominie Skaill, who smelt the old leaven of Prelacy and Popery strong in this, for he believed only in the Kirk of Scotland as by law established, confirmed by the Revolution Settlement and Treaty of Union (though sadly outraged by the restoration of patronage in 1712); and such language, he averred, was rank hanging matter in an adult!

Quentin's dark eyes were wont to sparkle and flash on hearing these rebukes, or France abused, as she was pretty sure to be, daily, by everyone in those days; but after a time all these emotions and ideas gave place to local influences, and he settled down into a quiet little Scottish schoolboy, though, as we have said, somewhat of a truant withal.

His mind sobered and changed even as his clustering golden curls grew into dark and shining chestnut, though dreamlike memories would still steal upon his mind—memories that came he knew not whence.

Once when the dominie pointed to a Vandyke that hung in the great hall, representing Lady Jean of Rohallion, and told him that "she was an evil-minded woman, who persecuted the saints of God in her time; and that the cross at her girdle was the hammer of Beelzebub, and an emblem of her damnable apostasy from the pure and covenanted Kirk of Scotland," the boy's eyes would assume their gleam, and then a pure, soft smile, as he said that "his mother in France wore just such a cross as that, and that he would love the picture for her sake."

Then Dominie Skaill would groan in spirit over "the bad bluid" that boiled in a heart so young and tender, and stamping up and down the hall in his square-toed shoes, would openly express his fears that "the bairn was a veritable young Claverhouse!"

On other occasions, and they were many, when Quentin was alone, and gazing on the sea that frothed so white about the Partan Craig, out of the perplexing mists of memory came the dreamlike incidents of the wreck on that gloomy November night; his loving father's pale and despairing face, when the ship went down and left them all struggling amid the cold waves of

a dark and stormy sea; and with these memories came others beyond that time, softer and dearer, like the recollections of a prior existence.

There was the cathedral, with its lights and music at mass; the bridge, the river, and the windmill; how surely he should know them all again! And so pondering and dreaming thus, he would lie for hours on the sunny bank that sloped southward from the cliff of Rohallion, while the blue Firth of Clyde that chafed upon the rocks below, came faintly and dreamily to his ear.

Thus his vision was turned inward, though his eyes were perhaps fixed on the blue ether overhead, where the seamews were revolving and the great eagle soaring aloft; or on the distant tower and Tolbooth of Maybole that stood clear and dark against the sun-set flush—the wavy undulations of the Carrick hills; the blue peaks of Arran that rose afar off, on the nearer coast of Cunninghame, chequered by golden light on violet coloured shadow.

CHAPTER IX.

THE QUARTERMASTER'S SNUGGERY.

"Ambition is dead within me: but there is some satisfaction in a queen's commission, with half-pay at the end of it."—*Once a Week*.

QUENTIN KENNEDY loved the venerable dominie, but was undoubtedly bored by his pedantry, and to escape it, once actually disappeared for three entire days, to the utter dismay of the whole household at Rohallion, when it was naturally supposed that he had been kidnapped by gipsies, or carried off by the smugglers, who frequented the coves in the rocks when the nights were dark and gusty; that he had been carried off by the pressgang from Ayr, or had fallen over the cliffs when bird-nesting, until Elsie Irvine arrived at the castle, in tears and tribulation, to announce that he had cunningly secreted himself in the "saut-backet" of her husband's clinker-built boat, and gone with the little fleet from the adjacent bay to the herring fishery.

When Lady Winifred's old friend and school companion, Eleonora Hamilton (then Countess of Eglinton) visited the castle with her two unmarried daughters, the Ladies Lilius and Mary—which she did once yearly—it was always a happy time for Quentin; for then he had two little companions with whom to romp and swing in the old terraced gardens; for whom to gather

birds' eggs and butterflies in the old woods of Rohallion, and before whom he could exhibit his boyish skill in shooting at the butts, or hooking a brown trout in the Girvan or the Doon; but of the two, his chief friend and playmate was the fair-haired, blue-eyed, and softly-voiced little Lady Mary, with whom he generally opened the dance at the annual kirk, or harvest home, which Lord Rohallion always gave to the field-labourers in the great barn of the home-farm, and on these occasions, the brightest ribbons that Maybole could produce, together with the dominie's violin and Pate's pipes, were in full requisition.

On a November night, about four years after the boy's arrival at Rohallion, his two friends, the dominie and ex-quartermaster, were seated in the latter's apartment discussing, which they did very frequently, the boy's pranks and progress, with a pipe of tobacco and a jug of hot toddy at the same time.

John Girvan's "snuggery," as he termed it, was in a square tower at an angle of the barbican wall of the old castle. The loopholes for defences by arrows or arquebusses yet remained under the window-sills, to enfilade all approach to the gateway. They had been made with special reference to the English and the Kennedies of Kilkenny; but there was a chance now that "the French might come by the same road."

The chamber was small, but very cosy, papered with a queer old pattern over the wainscoating; the walls were of vast strength, the windows arched, the fire-place deep, and lined with shining Delft squares of the Puritan times, representing bulbous-shaped Dutch skaters, and the instructive old Scriptural story of Susannah and the Elders.

The dark oak floor was minus a carpet, for the quartermaster had been long enough under canvas and in barracks to despise such a luxury.

Over the mantelpiece was a gaudily-coloured print of the Marquis of Cornwallis in full uniform, with a huge wig and cocked hat—New York and a hecatomb of slaughtered Yankees in the distance. Under this work of art hung the quartermaster's old regimental sword, with its spring shell, his crimson sash and gilt gorget, graven with a thistle, and the (to him) magic number "25"—his household *lares*, as the dominie called them.

Bound with iron, an old baggage-trunk, that had been over half the habitable globe, bore the same number and regiment.

Pipes, whips, and spurs and boot-tops, dog-eared army lists and empty bottles, littered all the mantelshelf and window-bunkers, and with some very wheezy-looking old chairs made up the appurtenances of the room, through which the fire shed a blaze so cheerful, that the dominie had no desire, when he heard the wind

moaning through the battlements above, to face the blast which howled down the lonely glen that lay beyond the haunted gate.

A broiled poor man o' mutton and fried trout from the Girvan smoked on the table beside the toddy jugs, and all within looked cheery, as these two oddly-assorted friends, who had scarcely an idea in common, sat down to supper.

"Aye, dominie, it is a dreich night!" said the quartermaster, filling his pipe; "but your jug is empty, brew again; and now wi' a' your book-learning, can you tell me the name o' the man who invented this same whisky?"

"Many a night in Mossiel, wi' Burns, we've drank to his memory, whoever he was," replied the dominie; "but odds my heart! John Girvan, I have scarcely got the better o' the fright that brat o' a laddie gave us, when he disappeared and ran off to the herring fishery."

The quartermaster laid down his pipe gravely, for he and the dominie had a perpetual disagreement about how Quentin was to be educated. The former laboured hard to teach him the use of fire-arms (Brown Bess in particular), to box, and to handle the pistol and broadsword, saying, that without such knowledge he would never be a man; while the poor dominie laboured still harder to infuse in his nature a love for literature and the arts of peace, and though compelled to console himself for Quentin's rapid progress in those of war, by some musty quotation concerning the Actian games which were instituted in honour of the victory over Marc Antony, he could not resist asking,

"To what end do you teach the laddie all this military nonsense—this use of sword and musket, John?"

"For drill and discipline, dominie—drill and discipline."

"Both excellent things in their way, quartermaster; the Romans, who conquered all the world——"

"South of Forth and Clyde—hand ye there, dominie!"

"Well, they conquered by the force of their discipline, and as that declined, so did their power; but to what profitable end, I say, teach the bairn all these havers about wars, battles, and bombshelling? Do you wish to make of him a tearing, swearing, tramping dragoon, such as we read of in the days of that atrocious Claverhouse?"

"Not at all, dominie."

"Then," asked Skail, angrily, "what would ye make of him?"

"A man, where you would made him a molly."

The dominie snook his head, and as he did so the bag of his wig shook pendulously behind him.

"John Girvan, bairns should be taught early to delight, not in

arts which conduce to the destruction of human life, but in such as lead to charity, mercy, benevolence, and humanity."

"Quite right, dominie, and for utterly ignoring all these, I know a man of peace who had his lugs cropped off his head."

"Cropped?"

"Shaven clean off his head by a knife."

"Barbarous! barbarous!"

"But just, dominie—strictly just. Did you ever hear how our 28th, or North Gloucestershire, came to be called *the Slashers*?"

"Sooth to say, John, I never heard o' them at all."

"Well, pass the bottle, and I care na if I tell you. A company of ours was quartered with them in a town on the Canadian frontier. It was during the winter of '79, when the atmosphere was so cold that the hoar-frost on our sentries' greatcoats made them look for a' the world like figures round a bridecake; stiff half-and-half grog froze before you could drink it; the bugles froze with the buglers' breath; flesh came off if you touched a swordblade or musket barrel, and the air was full of glittering particles. We had to saw our ration beef in slices, and half roast our loaves before we could cut them. Men were found dead in the snow every day—stiff and frozen; in fact, there was no way of keeping ourselves warm, do what we might. I don't know how many degrees it was *below* the freezing point, but the cold was awful, and it seemed as if the mercury was frozen too!

"Amid the severity of that Canadian winter, the mayor of the town, a democratic and discontented ruffian, refused billets to the soldiers' wives, and the poor women and helpless children of the 28th nearly all perished in the streets; in the mornings they were found frozen like statues, or half-buried among the snow; but severely was the mayor punished, for one day as he sat at dinner the table was suddenly surrounded by a party of savages, in war-paint, with hunting shirts, fur cloaks, moccasins, and wampum belts. They whooped, yelled, brandished their tomahawks, and then dragging the mayor from the table, sliced off both his ears. After this they at once disappeared, and it was not known for some days that these pretended savages were soldiers of the 28th whose wives had perished through his inhumanity. It was for this that we first called them 'slashers,' a title which their bravery in the war fully confirmed."

"The wretch was rightly served," said the dominie; "and truly did our old friend Rob write of 'man's inhumanity to man making countless thousands mourn.'"

"Aye, dominie, that poem is as gude as any sermon that ever was written!" exclaimed the quartermaster.

"But to return to Quentin; it is wi' such barbarous stories as

that you have told me you fill the bairn's head, John, at an age when his mind should be impressed wi' ideas of charity and mercy. How noble it was of the great Constantine, to employ his son, as soon as he could write, in signing pardons and granting boons. Under favour, John, the pen is a nobler instrument than the sword."

"Then how about Wight Wallace and the Bruce of Carrick, dominie, eh? Had they never learned to handle aught but a goosequill, where would our auld mother Scotland have been to-day? so shut pans, ye auld gomeril, and brew your toddy."

The dominie chuckled and said,

"I have worn a red coat mysel', quartermaster, for when Thurot was off the west coast, I was a year in the volunteers under the Earl o' Glencairn."

"The best year of your life, dominie!"

"I had a sword, a musket, and a bayonet. 'Thrice is he armed who hath his quarrel just.'"

"And how did you feel when you saw the beacons blazing on the Carrick hills, and heard the drums dinging before you, on the night o' the *false alarm*?" asked the old soldier with a sly smile.

"I shouted like Julian when sent to war, 'Oh Plato! Plato! what a task for a philosopher.'"

"The deevil you did!" exclaimed Girvan, puffing vigorously; "and what then?"

"Glencairn fined me twenty merks Scots, for speaking in the ranks."

"Fined—I'd have you flogged at the drumhead wi' the cat-o'-nine-tails."

"The Romans used a vine sapling, as we find in Juvenal, and——"

"Bother those Romans, whoever they were, if they really ever existed at all! You are ever and aye stuffing Quentin wi' those Romans and their sayings and doings."

"Indubitably, and I would that I could teach him all that ever was known to the seven wise men o' Greece."

"And who were they?"

"Bias, Pittacus, Solon, Chilo, Periander, Cleobulus, and Thales," replied the dominie with singular volubility; "all men who flourished before the Christian era."

"Powder and pipeclay! Egad, I'm glad they don't flourish now. Their names sound just like those of a regiment of niggers we had at the siege of Boston. Pardon, dominie,—but I must have my joke. I wish I could teach Quentin something of fortification," he added thoughtfully, as he watched the pale smoke from his pipe curling up towards the ceiling.

"It is an art almost coeval wi' man," responded the other approvingly.

"True," rejoined the quartermaster; "for did not Cain build a city with a wall round it on Mount Libuan, and call it after his son Enoch?"

"Right, quartermaster, right!" said the pedant, rubbing his hands with pleasure. "Yea, and the Babylonians, after the waters of the flood, built them cities, and wi' strong ramparts encompassed them about; but I hope, if I live, to hear Quentin Kennedy expound on all that and more, in the pulpit of Rohallion kirk."

"What!" roared the quartermaster, in a tone that made the dominie start back; "make a minister of him?"

"Yea, John Girvan; and wherefore not?"

"He has about as much vocation for the kirk as I have. Would you have him drag out his life like a drone in a Scotch country manse, when a' the world is up and stirring? Quentin is a penniless lad wi' a proud spirit, so he must e'en follow the drum, as his father followed it before him."

"His father before him, say ye? Some puir fellow, the son o' an outlawed Jacobite, doubtless. I dinna think, quartermaster, that *he* made much o' the trade o' war; a trade that is clean against scripture in every respect."

"Dominie, did not Richard Cameron, who fell bravely, battling for the right, at Airs Moss, only a hundred and twenty years ago, know every cut of his good broadsword, as well as the texts of his Bible? A man's hands should always be ready to keep his head; thus, whatever may be before him, I have taught Quentin to fence and shoot."

"No harm, perhaps, in either, for I remember me," replied the inveterate quoter, "that Bishop Latimer says of himself 'my poor father was as diligent to teach me to shoot, as to learn any other thing.' But anent Quentin Kennedy, you and I will never be able to agree, John, so——"

"We'll e'en leave the lad's future to himself, dominie. I think he has some right to be consulted, and, odds heart! he is but a bairn yet; a bairn, though, that can handle his pistol as well as my other pupil, the Master Cosmo."

"Fie, fie, John Girvan! and a most sinfu' use has the Master made o' his skill."

"He has paraded a good many bucks and bullies by daylight; but what would you have an officer to do? If insulted he must challenge; if challenged, he must go out, or quit the service and society too."

The dominie shook his head solemnly in deprecation of such sentiments, and said—

"I fear me muckle the Master will meet wi' his match some day, and a black one it will be for the house o' Rohallion; but now for my *deoch an doruis*. Pass the dram bottle. Ugh! the road down the glen will be eerie to-night, and I can never forget that awfu' morning, John, when I saw the wraith of Cosmo's uncle, standing at the castle-gate, in his wig, cocked hat, and red coat, silent and grim, even as the ghost of Cæsar, on the night before Philippi."

"Wi' a' the whisky you had under your belt, I wonder you didna see *two* o' them."

"Jest not—jest not," said the dominie, with, we are sorry to say, half-tipsy solemnity, as he drained his *deoch* to the last drop, tied a large yellow bandanna over his three-cornered hat and under his chin, assumed his walking-staff, and prepared to depart. "I hope the servant-lass will air the night-cap that she puts wi' the Bible at my bedside every night."

The quartermaster laughed slily, as he knew that the cap referred to was a stoup of strong ale, which, in the old Scottish fashion, the dominie's servant always placed with the Bible on a stool near his bed.

The poor dominie's potations mounted to his head as he began to move, and, striking his cane emphatically as he stepped away, he sung, in somewhat uncertain tones:—

"My kimmer and I lay down to sleep,
Wi' twa pint stoups at our bed's feet:
And aye when we wakened we drank them dry,
Sae what think ye o' my kimmer and I?
Toddling butt and toddling ben,
When round as a neep ye come toddling hame!"

And so he departed in a mood that neither brownie nor bogle could scare.

CHAPTER X.

FLORA WARRENDER.

"Lovely floweret, lovely floweret,
Oh! what thoughts your beauties move—
When I pressed thee to my bosom,
Little did I know of love.
In Castile I never entered—
From Leon too, I withdrew,
Where I was in early boyhood,
And of love I nothing knew."—*Poetry of Spain.*

So without change, the joyous and dreamy period of Quentin's boyhood glided rapidly away, in studies, amusements, and occasionally mischief, such as throwing kail-castocks down the

dominies's *lum*, and blowing tam-o'-reekies* through his key-hole, until about his seventeenth year, when the Castle of Rohallion became the home of another inmate.

Mrs. Warrender of Ardgour, widow of Lord Rohallion's old friend and companion-in-arms, Colonel John Warrender, who, as we have related, fell at the head of the Corsican Rangers in the Egyptian expedition, died in London, bequeathing to the care, tuition, and trust of Lady Winifred her only daughter, in charge of whom Lady Eglinton arrived from England in the summer of 1806, accompanied by her two unmarried daughters, Lillas and Mary, now growing up into tall and handsome young women, with whom Quentin could scarcely venture to romp and race as in former days.

It was evening when an outrider, as a sort of avant-courier, arrived from Maybole to announce that the countess was coming with her charge; so Lady Rohallion assumed her black silk capuchin, her husband his cane and jaunty old-fashioned triangular Nivernois (to which he rigidly adhered, despite the almost general adoption of the present form of round hat), and summoning Quentin, who was busy among the fire-arms in the gun-room, they set forth for a stroll along the avenue to meet their friends.

"Poor Jack Warrender!" said Lord Rohallion, musingly; "I wonder whether his girl resembles him?"

"I should think not," replied Lady Winifred, smiling, as her recollections of the late colonel's personal appearance were not flattering.

"I have not seen the child for four or five years."

"Flora will be past sixteen now. She had her mother's forehead, and soft, dovelike eyes; the colonel was a stern and rough-featured man."

"But a good-hearted fellow, Winny, as ever cracked a joke or a bottle. I saw him first as a jolly ensign, carrying the union colour of his regiment, at Saratoga, and, egad, my dear, that wasn't yesterday."

"Flora's mother died of a broken heart."

"She was always delicate," said Lord Rohallion.

"Ah, like most men, you don't believe in that kind of death; but she never recovered the shock of her husband's fall in Egypt, and thus, after five years' constant ailing and pining, she has passed away to her place of rest."

"Poor woman!"

"What is the difference of age between Flora and our Cosmo?"

* Lighted tow blown through a cabbage-stock.

"A suggestive question."

"How?"

"Never mind, my lord."

"Some sixteen years or more, I think. You should remember best, Winny, their ages."

After this they walked on in silence, the lady, already match-making and scheming out certain matters with reference to the young heiress of Ardgour, had her mind bent on futurity; while the old lord's thoughts were with the past, full of other days and other scenes, when youth and hope went hand in hand—days, which, in the wars of Napoleon, were being fast forgotten by the world at large.

The evening was beautiful; the air was still and calm, though at times a breeze stirred gently the foliage of the sycamores of that stately avenue which led from the haunted gate to the ancient highway from Maybole—trees which had cast their shadows on many a generation of the Crawfords of Rohallion, who had gambolled along that avenue in infancy, and tottered down it in age; and since the days of King James VI. they had seen many a son of the house go forth with his sword and return no more, for many of them have fallen in domestic feuds and foreign wars.

On the uplands the golden grain was waving, but there was no sound in the air save the voice of the cornrake in the fields, the hum of the summer bee, the plaintive notes of the cushat-dove among the foliage of the oak-wood shaw, or the flash of the bull-trout in the linn that bubbled on one side of the avenue, and disappeared under a quaint arch, on each side of which stood two moss-grown lions sejant, the armorial supporters which the family of Rohallion inherited from Sir Raynold Crawford, high sheriff of Ayrshire, the uncle of Sir William Wallace of Elderslie.

Quentin, who had been in advance with a couple of barking terriers, now came running back, waving his hat, to announce that Lady Eglinton's carriage was coming bowling along the dusty road; and just as he spoke it wheeled into the echoing avenue, where the horses' hoofs crashed among the gravel.

The driver, who was seated on a splendid hammercloth (with the dragons, *vert*, vomiting fire), reined up on perceiving Lord and Lady Rohallion, and the servants at once threw down the steps as their mistress desired to alight.

Assisted by her host, she stepped down, a stately woman of a noble presence, considerably older than her friend, Winifred Maxwell, being past her sixtieth year, but still bent on being young despite wrinkles and other little indications of "the

enemy." She wore the then fashionable little bonnet of green and blue, or union velvet, as it was named, in honour of Ireland, a large chequered Burdett kerchief over her neck and shoulders, and her whole person was redolent of hair-powder and perfume, as her black satin robe swept over the gravel.

Her two daughters sprang forth after her, accompanied by the new visitor (of whom more anon), all three handsome and lady-like young girls, faultless in symmetry, delicacy, and refinement, and all possessed of considerable beauty, and looking happy, blooming, and smiling, in their Leghorn gipsy hats, which were wreathed with flowers.

"Welcome, my dear Lady Eglinton," said Rohallion, bowing like an old-fashioned courtier of Versailles or Holyrood, as he planted his little Nivernois under his left arm, and gave his right hand to the Countess to lead her up the avenue; "unlike your humble servant, egad, madam, you grow younger every day—and then your travelling costume—I vow it is charming."

"My lord," said the old lady, smiling, "you are still quite a Lothario, and as complimentary as ever. My girls at least have the latest London fashions, but I prefer the bonnet of 1801, as being more becoming my style—perhaps I should say, my years."

We question whether this amiable lady and her daughters in "the latest London fashion," would have been in the mode now, as their narrow skirts made them exactly resemble the figures we see in the little Noah's ark.

"And this is Flora Warrender," said Lord Rohallion (after the usual greetings were over), kissing the girl's hand and forehead with kindness and regard; "welcome here, child, for the sake of your father. Many a day Jack Warrender and I have been under fire together, and often we have shared our grog and our biscuit—long before you saw the light, Flora."

Her fine eyes filled as the old lord spoke, and a beautiful expression passed over her soft, fair face. She was in second mourning—muslin with black spots; and her gipsy hat with its crape bows gave her a very picturesque look. She had sandalled shoes on her feet, that, like her hands, were small and very finely shaped. Her ear-rings and bracelets were of brown Tunbridge wood, then the simple fashion when not in full dress.

"We have brought a sweet companion for you, Quentin," said Lady Mary, laughing, as she presented both her hands to her young friends; "wont she be quite a little wife for you?"

"Mary!" said her mamma, in an admonitory tone.

"Of course, mamma, you know I am much too old for Quentin."

"Too tall, at least, to talk nonsense," replied Lady Eglinton,

whose ideas of deportment belonged to the last century, and whose old-fashioned stateliness always abashed Quentin, who blushed like a great schoolboy as he was, and played nervously with his little hat.

"What, mamma!" persisted Mary, "mayn't I still flirt with Quentin?"

But her mother, who with all her kindness of heart, had always doubts about the wisdom of lavishing so much attention on a strange child (whose future and antecedents were alike obscure), as the Rohallion family bestowed on poor Quentin Kennedy, turned away to speak with her host and hostess, leaving the young people to themselves, while the carriage, with its double imperial, was driven round to the stable court.

"I hope you have had a pleasant journey from the South?" said Lady Rohallion.

"We had a break-down at York, and I was sorely tired when we reached Edinburgh. There I was somewhat recompensed by hearing Kemble in *Macbeth*, and Mrs. Kemble sing the new fashionable ballad, 'The Blue Bells of Scotland,' at the conclusion of the piece; but the candle-snuffers neglected our box so much, that, before the farce, we were driven to the card assembly in the new room in George-street, where, for a dull little town, there was a pretty genteel assemblage; though the dresses of the women were five years behind London, I was glad to see hair-powder still worn in such profusion."

"Since the Union," said Lady Rohallion, "Edinburgh has been a city of the dead, and very different from what our grandmothers described it."

"A veritable village, where one meets none above the rank of mere professional men, struggling hard, poor fellows, to keep up appearances."

"But at the assembly, mamma, there was *one* person of position," said Lady Jane.

"True, child—the young Earl of Aboyne, whose name was unfortunately associated with that of the late unhappy Queen of France, Marie Antoinette."

"Ah, yes," said Rohallion, laughing, "I remember that the Polignacs spoke maliciously of her dancing *Ecossaises* with him at the balls of Madame d'Ossun."

"We went with him to Corri's Concerts, which are led by Signor Stablini, and also to see the storming of Seringapatam, opposite the New College, 'the wonder of the English metropolis, for the last twelve months,' as the papers have it. I have brought your ladyship the 'Last Minstrel,' the new poem of that clever gentleman, Mr. Walter Scott, which has just

appeared ; Mr. Constable's shop at the Cross was quite besieged by inquirers for it ; and for your lordship I have the Gazettes detailing the captures of Martinique and Guadaloupe."

"I thank you—they will be a rare treat for me and for old John Girvan, who enjoys the reversion of all my military literature."

"At Edinburgh we had quite a chapter of accidents. One of Lord Eglinton's favourite horses came in dead lame at the Leith Races ; then my abigail left me abruptly, having gained a prize of two thousand guineas in the State lottery, and with it an offer of marriage from a dissenting minister. A wheel came off the carriage just as we were descending that steep old thoroughfare named the West Bow, and by this accident all our new bonnets from the Gallery of Fashion in the High-street were destroyed ; it also caused a fracas between our poor coachman and a lieutenant of the City Guard, who, with his silver epaulettes on, and all the airs of office, was drumming a woman out of town. The fracas caused a three days' detention, as one of the bailies, a democratic grocer, threatened to send our coachman on board the pressing-tender at Leith for contumacy ; but ultimately and happily, the name of Lord Eglinton terrified the saucy patch into complaisance. Then we heard of foot-pads infesting the Lanark-road, but fortunately we had the escort of some of the Scots Greys who were conveying French prisoners to the West Country, so we reached Maybole without any untoward accident."

While the countess was rehearsing the adventures of her journey, Lord Rohallion, partly oblivious of her and of her daughters, had been absorbed by Flora, in whose soft features he sought in vain for the stern eyebrows, the high nose and cheekbones of her father, the colonel.

Lady Rohallion glanced at their ward, from time to time, with mingled satisfaction and interest, as she had certain views regarding her, and these were nothing less than a marriage, a few years hence, between her and Cosmo, the master, an idea which had strengthened every day she looked towards Ardgour, the well-wooded heights of which were visible from the windows of Rohallion.

"But man proposes, and God disposes," says the proverb. How these views were realized, we shall come in time to see.

All unaware of the plots forming against her in the busy brain of her mother's friend, Flora had already drawn near Quentin, and, surveying him with something of wonder and interest in her fine eyes, she said—

"So you are the little boy of whom I have heard so much in the letters of Lady Rohallion to mamma?"

"I am Quentin Kennedy, Miss Warrender."

"Who was rescued from that horrible wreck?"

"Yes."

"You are not so *very* little, though."

"I am taller than *you*," replied our young friend, in a tone of pique.

"But I look the eldest."

"We are much of an age; I heard Lady Rohallion say so."

"I think I shall like you."

"I am sure that I shall like you very much!" responded Quentin, blushing in spite of himself. "You know that we are to be companions, and learn our studies together?"

"And such delightful walks we shall have in this old avenue," said she, looking up at the grand old sycamores, between which the golden sunset fell in flakes of warm light.

Thus the boy and girl were friends at once.

About five was then the fashionable dinner-hour; thus, as Lady Eglinton had arrived later, a few friends and neighbours came to sup at Rohallion.

The conversation all ran on rents, agriculture, and politics; high-toryism had full sway. Thus Napoleon, the Corsican tyrant—who was averred to have copied Alexander in Egypt, Cæsar in Italy, and Charlemagne in France, no bad example surely—together with Sir Francis Burdett, and the atrocious opposition party, were very liberally devoted to the infernal gods.

The younger ladies idled over the piano, in the old-fashioned yellow damask drawing-room. The faithless Quentin, apparently quite oblivious of the presence of his former friend, Lady Mary, was quite fascinated by the new visitor, whom he had innumerable matters to tell and to show.

The worthy lord smiled benignantly as he watched them, and, while taking a pinch of the Prince's mixture from the gold-enamelled box, which had been presented to him by H.R.H. the Duke of York, he remarked to an old friend, who, in powder, wide cuffs, pigtail, and knee-breeches, seemed the counterpart of himself, that "truly we lived in rapid and wonderful times."

Poor Lord Rohallion! he could little foresee the time when posterity would be flying over Europe at the rate of sixty miles an hour, and when, instead of powdering his cherished pigtail, he might have it cut by machinery—the Victorian age of Crystal Palaces, crinoline, and chloroform—of spirit-rapping, wordy patriotism, and paper collars.

CHAPTER XI.

LOVE, AND MATTERS PERTAINING THERETO.

“They would sit and sigh,
And look upon each other and conceive
Not what they ailed; yet something did they ail,
And yet were well—and yet they were *not* well;
And what was their disease they could not tell.”

ACCORDING to a recent novelist, “the happiest portions of existence are the most difficult to chronicle.” As we approach that period of Quentin’s career, which was indeed his happiest, we experience something of this difficulty; and having much concerning his adventures to relate, must glance briefly at the gradual change from boyhood into youth—from youth to manhood, almost prematurely, for, by the course of events, misfortunes came early; and somewhat abruptly was Quentin thrust forth into the great battle of life.

But we anticipate.

At that happy time, when he had neither thought nor care—no past to regret, and no future to dread, Flora Warrender and Quentin were in the bloom of their youth. The girl was already highly accomplished; but Dominie Skail, when acting as tutor to the lad, strove to imbue *her* with some love for classical lore, and he bored her accordingly.

In winter especially, the old castle was dull and visitors were few. The old quartermaster talked to her of Minden and Saratoga; of proceeding for leagues upon leagues in heavy marching order up to the neck in snow; of scalp-hunting Choctaws and Cherokees, tomahawks, and war-paint. The parish minister, fearing that she had become “tainted with Episcopacy during her sojourn in the English metropolis,” dosed her with such gloomy theology as can be found nowhere out of Scotland, mingled with local gossip, which often took the form of scandal; the dominie prosed away “anent” the Romans, or of chemical action, the laws of gravitation, the dogmas of Antichrist, and the dreadful views of society taken by the Corsican usurper and his blood-smeared Frenchmen, till the young heiress felt her head spin. Lord Roballion, whose ideas were chiefly military, and Lady Winifred, whose thoughts ran chiefly on housewifery and acting doctor to all the children on the estate, were not very amusing either; so she turned with joy and pleasure to her new friend Quentin Kennedy, who was ever ready for a gallop into the country, a ramble in the woods, or a romp in the garden.

Long and many were the confidences between them, for both were orphans, and they had thus many emotions in common.

He told her in detail what she had already heard, and what all in the Bailiewicks of Carrick, Kyle, and Cunninghame knew, the story of his being saved from the wreck of an unknown ship, whose whole crew perished, and that his father, who had been a Scottish officer in the service of Monsieur, was drowned with them; that *now*, he could barely shadow out his thin spare figure, and pale and anxious face, it seemed so long since then; that, save the Crawfords of Rohallion, he had no friends on earth that he knew of, and that he was to become a soldier, he believed—at least his good friend Mr. Girvan always said so, and that was his own wish.

"A soldier!" repeated Flora; "my poor papa was one, and those horrid French killed him. Oh that I were a man, to join with you in a life of such peril and adventure! But Lady Rohallion says I am to be a soldier's wife," she added, smiling, and burying her pretty nostrils in a thick moss rose.

"To be married?"

"Yes; she says that the Master of Rohallion is to marry me, whenever he returns home."

"And do you love him, Flora?"

"I don't know," she replied, blushing as red as the rose in her hand, and casting down her dark eyelashes.

"Why?"

"Because, Quentin, I never saw him."

"Not even at Ardgour?"

"No, nor in London, for when my dear mamma was there, the Master was always at Windsor or Brighton with the Guards."

"Then why are you to marry him?" persisted Quentin.

"Because I am told that it will be very convenient for all parties, as the lands of Rohallion and those of Ardgour march together for miles over hill and glen," replied Flora, using the Scottish phrase for "adjoin."

Then she would tell him, with all the kindness and friendship of Lady Rohallion, how sorely she missed the extreme tenderness and gentleness of her own dear mother, and how that beloved parent sunk like a bruised reed, nor ever rallied since the terrible morning when news came to Ardgour that her father had fallen in battle under Abercrombie, and his general's letter and the Duke of York's too, alike failed to afford the consolation they expressed.

There was no love-making in confidences such as these; but both were young; the lad was handsome, sturdy, and impetuous. Flora was winning in manner and delicately beautiful, with soft dove-like dark eyes of violet-grey, and lashes that were almost

black like her hair; and such intercourse, if it was pleasant and delightful, was perilous work, and apt to lead to the development of a friendship that certainly would *not* be platonic.

When climbing the beetling cliffs that overhung the waves, the sea-pinks and wild flowers that grew in such dangerous places, were always culled, and the rare birds' eggs, that lay in the cliffs and crannies, were gathered by Quentin for Flora.

His whole desire and study were Flora Warrender and the anticipation of her every want and wish. Many of his sports, the trout pools in the Girvan, the fishing boats in the bay, the otter holes by the Doon, the covers where the golden pheasant lurked among the green and feathery fern, were neglected now for places nearer home—for the sycamore avenue, the terraced garden, the yew-hedge labyrinth, for wherever Flora was to be found, *he* was not far off.

Her soft and modulated voice was full of music, it had a chord in it that vibrated in his heart, so the lad sighed for her and knew not why.

Could it be otherwise when they were always together? They admired and sketched the same scenery—the cliffs of Rohallion and the gaping caverns below, where the sea boomed like thunder when the tide was coming in; the ruins of Kilhenzie; the old kirk in the wooded glen, where the golden broom and blue harebells grew; the long and stately avenue of sycamores, and the Lollard's linn that poured in white foam under its ancient bridge. When Flora drew, he was always there to marvel at the cunning of the lovely little hand that transferred all to paper so freely and so rapidly. They repeated the same poetry; they conned the same tasks, loved the same lights and shadows on glen and mountain, sea and shore; they had the same objects and haunts, and so they grew dear to each other, far dearer than either knew or suspected.

In those days, our young ladies, when singing, neither attempted to foist bad German or worse Italian on their listeners; neither did they dare to excel in opera, or run out into "artistic agonies." Like her mother before her, Flora contented herself with her native songs, which she sung with great sweetness (thanks to Corri's tuition), and Quentin was always at hand by the harp or piano to turn over the music, as all well-bred young men have done, since time immemorial.

How swiftly flew those days of peace and joy in that old castle by the sea, when each was all the world to the other! And is it strange, that situated as they were, a deep and innocent love should steal into their young hearts?

The old tenantry, particularly Elsie Irvine, who always con-

sidered Quentin her own peculiar pet, the quartermaster and the dominie, blessed them in their hearts, and called them "man and wife," which made them blush furiously; but nothing of this kind was ever said in the hearing of Lady Rohallion, for they had early learned intuitively that such jests would displease her; though those worthy souls could never gather *why*, until a period of our story yet to come.

Their friendship and regard grew with their years, and they never had a quarrel. The dominie likened them to Pyramus and Thisbe, and quoted largely from Ovid; but they were much more like their prototypes, Paul and Virginia.

Lord and Lady Rohallion seemed to forget that the time was coming rapidly when Quentin would cease to be a boy, and Flora a girl. Had they thought of this, much misery might have been spared to all; but, though many around them saw their progress, and marvelled where it would all end, the worthy old couple saw nothing to alter in the matter.

Two years more gave a manliness to the beauty, form, and character of Quentin Kennedy, while Flora, even when on the verge of womanhood, never lost the sweet and childlike sensibility of expression, which was the chief characteristic of her fair and delicate face.

In all this pleasant intercourse they had never known the true character, or the actual depth of their attachment for each other, until one day when Quentin was verging on eighteen.

They had been wandering in the leafy summer woods, far beyond the Girvan, which was in full flood, as rain had been falling heavily for some days previously. Fed by a thousand runnels from the Carrick hills, there was a *spate* (*Scottice*, torrent), in the stream, and at a part of it, about a mile distant from the castle of Rohallion, they heard old Jack Andrews tolling the dinner-bell, an ancient copper utensil which hung on the north gavel of the keep, where, in the days of old, it had frequently been rung for a less peaceful purpose than to announce that the soup was ready, or the sirloin done to a turn.

To make the circuit necessary to cross by the rustic bridge at the Kelpie's-pool (where, as all in Carrick know, a belated wayfarer was drowned by the river fiend) would have kept them too late, so Quentin took Flora in his arms to bear her through the stream, at a ford which was well known to him, and where the water was about four feet in depth.

"Dear Quentin, you will never be able to carry me," said Flora, laughing heartily at the arrangement; "I am sure that I am much too heavy."

"Not for me, Flora—come, let us try."

"Should you fall?"

"Well, Flora?"

"You would be swept away and drowned."

"I care not if *you* are safe," said he, gallantly; and, like a brave lad, he felt what he said.

"But I would be drowned, too, you rash boy," said she, with a charming smile.

"Then a ballad would be made about us, like so many lovers we have heard of and read about. Perhaps the Kelpie would be blamed for the whole catastrophe," replied Quentin, laughing, as he clasped her tightly in his arms. He was confident and bold, and the kind of training he underwent at the hands of our military friend, Mr. John Girvan, the gamekeeper, and others, made him hardy and strong beyond his years, yet he felt his fair Flora a heavier weight than he had quite reckoned on.

His high spirit gave him strength, however, and bearing her high upon his breast and shoulder, with her skirts gathered tightly round her, he boldly entered the rushing stream.

Then for the first time, when he felt her soft warm arm and delicate hand clasping his neck, half fearfully and half caressingly; when her cheek was close to his; when her breath mingled with his own, and her thick dark hair swept over his face, a strange and joyous thrill ran through him—a new and giddy emotion took possession of his heart.

Mysterious longings, aspirations, and hopes glowed within him and in mid-stream, even when the foaming water swept past with stones and clay, and roots of aged trees, Quentin did what he had never done before, he pressed his lips—and his soul seemed on them—again and again to those of Flora Warrender, and he murmured he knew not what in her ear, and she did not repel him.

Her excitement, perhaps, was too great; but we suspect that he was partly frightened and partly pleased. He landed her safely on the opposite bank, and again the castle-bell was heard waking the echoes of the woods.

The Girvan was passed now, and to speak metaphorically, that classic stream, the Rubicon, too!

They had divined the great secret of their hearts, and, hand in hand, in happy but thoughtful silence—Quentin, however, seeming the most abashed—they returned to Rohallion, both powerfully agitated by the new and sudden turn their affection seemed to have taken.

When their eyes met, their pulses quickened, and their colour came and went.

From that hour a change came over them; they were more

reserved, less frank, apparently, and, outwardly, less joyous. In the presence of Flora, Quentin grew timid, and he became more earnestly, but quietly assiduous to her than before.

Each, in absence, thought more of the other's image or idea; and each weighed the words and treasured the stolen smiles and tender tones of the other.

They were lovers now!

It was the voice of nature that spoke in their hearts. Flora had long loved her young companion without exactly knowing it. The episode of the river had brought the passion to a culminating point, and the veil was raised now. She saw his position and her own; and, while experiencing all a young girl's pride and rapture in the assurance that she has a lover, a strange sense of trouble came with her new emotion of joy.

As for Quentin, he slept but little that night; yet it was not his wetting in the river that kept him awake. He felt himself a new being—he trod on air! He rehearsed to himself again and again the adventure of the flooded stream, and went to sleep at last, with the memory of Flora's kisses on his lips, and murmuring the conviction which brought such delight to his young heart—

“She loves me! Dear, dear Flora loves me!”

CHAPTER XII.

A LAST KISS.

“Yes; open your heart! be glad,
Glad as the linnet on the tree:
Laugh, laugh away—and merrily
Drive away every dream that's sad.
Who sadness takes for joy is mad—
And mournful thought
Will come unsought.”

AFTER the climax recorded in our last chapter, events succeeded each other with great rapidity at the castle of Rohallion.

At that period of our story, Flora Warrender had attained her full stature—the middle height. In form, she was round, firm, and well developed—plump, to speak plainly—yet she was both symmetrical and graceful. Her eyes, we have said, were a kind of violet grey, clear, dark and exquisitely soft. Long lashes, and the remarkable form of her white lids, doubtless gave them this expression. Her forehead was low and broad, rather than high; her smile won all, and there was a charming air of delicacy

and refinement in her manner, over all her person, and in all she said or did. The form of her hand and foot alone sufficed to indicate her station, family and nurture.

"There is a mysterious character, heightened, indeed, by fancy and passion, but not without foundation in reality and observation, which lovers have ever imputed to the object of their affections," says Charles Lamb; and viewed through this most favourable medium, to the mind of Quentin Kennedy, young and ardent as he was, Flora Warrender, in all the bloom of her beauty and girlhood, seemed indeed something "exceeding nature."

Thus it was with a heart filled with painful anticipations of coming trouble, that he heard Lord Rohallion, one morning at breakfast, when Jack Andrews emptied the contents of the letter-bag before him, exclaim,—

"A letter from Cosmo! It is for you, Winny—the careless young dog, he has not written here for six months—not even to thank me for paying that precious gambling debt of his, lost among those popinjays of the 10th Hussars. Then there was that devilish scrape with the French dancer, whom he took down to Brighton with Uxbridge's son, Paget of the 7th, and that set——"

"Hush—remember Flora!" whispered Lady Rohallion.

"And the duel, too," persisted the old lord; "pah! in my time we didn't fight about such trumpery ware as French dancers. But what says Cosmo?"

"He comes home by the next mail," replied Lady Rohallion, a bright and motherly smile spreading like sunshine over her face; "how I shall rejoice to see him—the dear boy!"

"A *dear* boy, indeed!" said his lordship; "his Guards' life has cost me ten thousand guineas, if it has cost me a sixpence, Winny."

"Cosmo is coming," said Lady Rohallion, pointedly; "do you hear, Flora?"

"Yes, madam," replied Flora, colouring, and casting a furtive glance at Quentin, who appeared to be solely occupied with his coffee and kippered salmon.

"Cosmo writes that he has succeeded, by a death-vacancy, to the majority of his battalion of the Guards, which, of course, gives him the rank of lieutenant-colonel in the army."

"As captain he has enjoyed that for some years."

"He has therefore applied for the command of a line regiment."

"That will be simple enough, as so many second battalions are being raised just now for this projected expedition to Spain."

"The Duke of York has promised that his wish shall be gratified, and he has obtained a few months' leave, to come down here and see us—to have, as he says, a shot at the birds and a day's fly-fishing with John Girvan, in the Doon, before he returns to active service."

"And we shall see him, then——"

"In three days—three days at furthest, Flora," she added, with a glance at Miss Warrender.

"Bravo! you shall see something like a soldier, Flora, when Cosmo returns—something like what I was, about the time of Saratoga; eh, Jack Andrews?"

"Yes, my lord," responded Andrews, "coming to attention," as well as a man might with a hissing tea-urn in his hand.

"Send up the housekeeper, Andrews," said Lady Rohallion, "we must have the master's rooms put in order, and also one for his valet; for I suppose he comes here with him."

"If so fine a knight of the shoulder-knot can tolerate Rohallion," said his lordship, laughing.

"Come with me, Flora; I know, child, how glad you will be to assist me," added Lady Winifred taking Miss Warrender's hand, and leading her away, while Quentin, whose heart beat painfully, appeared to be busy with a newspaper. It detailed how forty thousand Frenchmen were being foiled before Zaragoza's walls of mud, yet it seemed all a maze to poor Quentin, and he saw not how Flora's rich colour deepened as she withdrew.

The master was coming to Rohallion!

Quentin remembered that gentleman's cold and haughty manner, and the half-concealed dislike which he ever manifested towards himself. He remembered what Flora had more than once told him two years ago of Lady Rohallion's intentions or hopes regarding her, and his heart grew sick with apprehension of a rival so formidable. He thought perhaps Cosmo might have formed an attachment elsewhere; but that would not prevent him from making love to Flora, were it only to kill time; and in her lover's eyes, she seemed so beautiful, that the master would certainly find it impossible to oppose the desire of his mother; and Quentin dreaded her yielding to the united influence of the family, and the advantages a suitor of such rank, experience, and position could offer.

He saw it all, and considered Flora lost to him!

Pride made him silent on the subject, and Flora, who with female acuteness divined what was passing in his mind, deemed it unnecessary or unwise to speak of it. She pitied Quentin, for she soon perceived how pale and miserable he looked; while

he misconstrued her reserve and became fretful, even petulant with her.

As if to add to his trouble, with that obtuseness of intellect (shall we call it petty malice?) peculiar to their order, some of those same persons, who long ago were wont to annoy Flora and make Quentin blush, by jestingly calling them "man and wife," now taunted him with his too probable loss on the arrival of the master, a boy's love being almost deemed, beyond any other, a legitimate subject for banter.

These stinging remarks made Quentin's heart swell with pride and jealousy, doubt and alarm, for now he heard the matter referred to daily in the course of conversation.

"So, my dear lady," he heard the parish minister say, when paying his periodical visit, "local rumour says that the master is coming home to obtain a final answer from a certain young lady, before rejoining the army."

Lady Rohallion merely bowed and smiled, as much as to say that local rumour was right.

"They have an old man's blessing," he added blandly, as he departed on his barrel-bellied Galloway cob, and thought of an augmented stipend in futurity.

"The master's coming home to enter for the heiress, and have a shy at the grouse and ptarmigan," the gamekeeper said, while cleaning the arms in the gunroom.

"He'll walk the course—wont he, Mr. Quentin?" added the groom, while preparing the stables for more horses.

"To carry the fortress, and leave *you* to march off with the honours of war," said the quartermaster at one time.

"A braw day will it be for Rohallion!" remarked the dominie at another. "There shall be dancing and feasting, scattering of nuts as we find in Pliny, with shooting of cannon, and shouts of *Io Hymen Hymenæ!*"

"My puir Quentin," said Elsie Irvine, while, pondering on such rumours, he wandered moodily enough "by the sad sea wave," "so you're gaun to lose your wee wifie at last?"

Thus every one seemed to discuss the affair openly and laughingly, and their remarks and mock condolences were as so many pins, needles, daggers, what you will, in the poor lad's heart, so that his doubts and fears became a veritable torture.

So great was the bustle of preparation in the castle, that the evening of the third day—the day so dreaded by Quentin—drew nigh without him obtaining a suitable opportunity of conversing with Flora; for so much did Lady Rohallion occupy that young lady's time, that he scarcely met her, save at meals, or in the

presence of others. But on this evening he suddenly saw her walking before him in the avenue, and hastening forward, he joined her in silence.

Flora seemed weary, but rosy and smiling. Quentin was nervously excited, but pale and unhappy in expression. Neither spoke, as they walked slowly forward, and he did not take her hand, nor did she take his arm, according to their usual custom, and the omission stung Quentin most. Frankness seemed at an end between them, as if three days had changed alike their nature and the relation that existed between them.

Flora looked very beautiful and piquante in her gipsy hat wreathed with roses, with her hair dark and wavy floating over her shoulders, while a blush mantled from time to time in her soft cheek, and her dark liquid eyes stole furtive glances from under their long lashes at her young lover, fond glances of pity mingled with coquetry, but all unseen by him, for Quentin's gaze was fixed on vacancy.

At length they reached the lower end of the avenue near the Lollard's Linn, where there still stands a sombre thicket of very ancient thorn trees, that were coeval, perhaps, with the first tower of Rohallion.

According to local tradition, this place was haunted by a spectre-hound, which no one could attempt to face or trace with safety, even if they had the courage to attempt it. Its form, that of a great, lean, lanky staghound, black as jet, was usually visible on clear nights, gazing wistfully at the moon; and in storms of wind and rain, its melancholy baying would be heard to mingle with the blast that swept through the ancient sycamores. It molested none; but if assailed, it became terrible, swelling up to nearly double its usual size, with back and tail erect like those of a polecat, its jaws red as blood, and its eyes shooting fire.

Those who saw the dog-fiend in this state became idiots, and sickened or died soon after. Tradition went further, and asserted that the spectre-hound was nothing else than the spirit of Lady Jean of Rohallion (whose grim portrait by Vandyke, with a hawk on her wrist and a gold cross at her girdle, hung in the ancient hall), a high-flying cavalier dame, by whose order, after the battle of Kilsythe, several fugitive Covenanters had been shot down in cold blood, and buried in that thicket, where her unquiet soul was condemned to guard their remains in this canine form until the day of doom.

At all events, the old thorn trees where the spectre was wont to appear, looked particularly gloomy on this evening, and as the lovers passed near it, Flora drew closer to Quentin, and then she perceived that his eyes were full of tears.

"Quentin—Quentin dear!" she exclaimed in a tone of earnest question and expostulation. It was the first time, almost, that she had addressed him since Cosmo's letter came, and now her voice thrilled through him. He threw his left arm round her, and clasping her right hand within his own, pressed it to his heart, which beat tumultuously, and while the long avenue seemed whirling round them, he said,—

"So Lady Rohallion has made up her mind that—that—you shall marry the master, Flora?"

"So it is the fear of this that distresses you?"

Pride sealed Quentin's lips.

"My poor Quentin," resumed Flora, looking tenderly and innocently into his eyes, "you love me very much, don't you?"

"Love you—love you, Flora!" he stammered.

"Yes."

"I love you better than my life!" he exclaimed passionately.

"Well," said she, with a beautiful smile and a gaiety of manner that he did not quite relish; "I will never marry any man but he whom I choose myself—certainly not he who is chosen by others."

"Darling Flora!"

"There—there—stop—and perhaps, Quentin, I mayn't marry you. 'Tis said people change when they grow older, and we are very young, you know; but Quentin, dear, I love you very, very much, be assured of that."

Her head dropped on his shoulder, and he kissed her passionately—the LAST time he was ever to do so in the old avenue of Rohallion.

At that moment the clatter of hoofs was heard, and ere they could part or regain their composure, two horsemen, one in advance of the other, both riding fast, with brown leather saddle-bags and long holsters—the first in a fashionable riding-coat with a cape, the latter in livery, and both in top-boots and spotless white breeches, passed up the avenue at a hand-gallop.

Both had seen our lovers near the thorn thicket, and the first horseman, whom Quentin's heart rightly foreboded to be the dreaded Master of Rohallion, turned in his saddle, and said something to his groom, indicating the pair with his whip. They both looked back and laughed immoderately, as they dashed through the ivy-clad arch of the haunted gate.

Separating in haste and confusion, Quentin and Flora hurried away to calm their excitement and seek the drawing-room.

CHAPTER XIII.

COSMO THE MASTER.

“Why make I friendships with the great,
 When I no favour seek?
 Or follow girls seven hours in eight—
 I need but once a week?
 Luxurious lobster night's farewell,
 For sober studious days!
 And Burlington's delicious meal,
 For salads, tarts, and peas.”—*Pope*.

THE first rider was indeed the Master of Rohallion, who had arrived with a punctuality that was more military than personal, as the Honourable Cosmo Crawford was somewhat erratic, and, as the Guards Club said significantly, “nocturnal,” in his habits; and here it may be well to inform the English reader that his haughty title of MASTER he obtained in right of his father being a Scottish baron, the custom being older than the reign of James IV.

In ancient times, the heirs apparent of Scottish nobles were not discriminated according to their father's rank by the titles of marquis, viscount, earl, or lord, but were simply styled as the Masters of Marischal, Glencairn, Glammis, Lindsay, Rohallion, and so forth, a custom existing in Scotland to the present day, in most houses, under ducal rank.

Cosmo Crawford was tall and strongly built, but handsome and graceful, with a cold and stately manner, that sometimes degenerated into banter, but seldom perfect suavity, and he had a somewhat cruel and sinister grey eye. The pupils of the latter feature had a peculiarity worth noticing. They possessed the power of shrinking and dilating like those of a cat. His hair was curly and worn in the Prince Regent's profusion, but without powder, that being already considered almost Gothic, or decidedly behind the age, the curls on one side being so arranged as to conceal a very palpable sword-cut. Like that of his valet; to whom he flung his riding-whip, hat, and coat, his garments were all of the latest Bond Street cut, and he lounged towards the yellow-damask drawing-room as coolly and leisurely as if he had only left it two hours instead of two years ago, according but a cold stare to the warm smile and respectful salute of poor old Jack Andrews, who, throwing open the door, announced,

“The Master, my Lord!”

"Welcome home, boy—God bless you!" shouted the hearty old lord, springing towards him; but Lady Rohallion anticipated him, and received Cosmo in her arms first.

"Dear mother, glad to see you," said he, kissing her forehead; "father, how well, how jolly and hale you look!"

"Hale," repeated the white-haired peer; "don't like to be called *hale*, it smacks, Cosmo, of breaking up; looking well, only for one's years, and so forth."

"And my Lady Rohallion," said Cosmo, kissing his mother's hand, "what shall I say of you?"

'With curious arts dim charms revive,
And triumph in the bloom of fifty-five.'

"Arts, you rogue," said his father; "it's no art, but the pure breeze from our Carrick hills and from the Firth of Clyde, with perhaps earlier-hours at night and in the morning than you keep in London."

"Well, I am sorry my compliments displease you both," said he, laughing; "I am unfortunate, but pray be merciful; I have bade adieu to the Guards, to London, and all its glories to rusticate among you for a time. So, so, here comes Miss Warrender of Ardgour, I presume, and Quentin Kennedy; I saw you both in the avenue, I think," added Cosmo, the pupils of his pale eyes shrinking as he concentrated his gaze and knit his dark brows, which nearly met in one, over a straight and handsome nose. "Flora, you are charming. May I——"

The kiss he bluntly gave her seemed to burn a hole in Quentin's heart, for it may readily be supposed that he saluted the lovely young girl with much more *empressement* than he did the worthy lady his mother. Flora blushed scarlet, and glanced at Quentin imploringly, as much as to say, "don't be angry, dearest—you see that I cannot help this;" but he felt only rage to see the little cherry lip, which his own had so lately touched in tremulous love and reverence, roughly and eagerly saluted by this *brusque* and *blasé* guardsman. Rapid though Flora's glance was, the latter detected it.

"And this is Quentin?" said he, surveying him through his eyeglass, with a deepening knit in his dark brows, and a smile on his haughty lips; "what a great hulking fellow he has become! Begad, he is tall enough for a rear-rank grenadier; and why is he not set to do something, instead of idling about here, and no doubt playing the devil with the preserves?"

There was some sense in the question, but coming from such a quarter, and the tone in which it was spoken, cut Quentin to the quick.

"He is barely done with his studies," urged Lord Rohallion, coming to his favourite's rescue.

"Before I was his age, I had mounted my first guard at St. James's Palace."

"And I mine on the banks of the Weser," said his father.

Quentin looked steadily at the cold, keen face of the master, who was not yet six-and-thirty—but his Guards' life made him look much older; thus, to a lad of Quentin's years, those of the master seemed quite patriarchal; a time came, however, when he thought otherwise, and removed the patriarchal period of life a few years further off.

"Well, Cosmo, talking of age," said Lord Rohallion, slapping his tall son on the back, "to be lieutenant-colonel of a line regiment at six-and-thirty, with the Cross of the Bath, for doubtless you will get it——"

"Of course, father, of course—one thing follows the other—well?"

"Is being decidedly lucky," said Lady Winifred, closing his lordship's sentence, and glancing at Flora, to see what she thought of it.

"With the prospect of a long war before him, too."

"Yes, father, and I hope that the luck in store will belie the prophecy of my old foster-mother, Elsie Irvine, at the Coves, who used to allege, that when I *first* left your room, mother, a puling and a new-born brat, I was carried *down* a stair instead of up, a certain token that I should never rise in the world. I have often made the Prince Regent, Paget, and other fellows laugh at that story; yet I have always had a fair run of success in everything I undertake."

"Which should make you in future avoid all affairs at Chalk Farm, and so forth; you have had three men out there in three years, Cosmo."

"And winged them all. My dear lord, don't talk. Some small sword affairs of yours, when Leicester Fields was the fashionable place, are still remembered in London."

"Yes—I ran two friends of Mr. Wilkes fairly through the body there one morning, for permitting themselves to indulge in national reflections, and would do so again if the same cause were given me: but, zounds! what else could we do in those days of the 'North Briton?' By-the-bye, is this new movement about the stuff called gas spreading in London?"

"Yes; I wish you had been there on the 28th of January, 1807, and seen Pall-Mall actually lighted with it—by a man named Winsor, the Cockney call him a madman for thinking of such a scheme!"

"Did you pass through Edinburgh?"

"I was obliged to do so, my lord, unfortunately."

"Did you make any stay there?"

"Stay! I should think not—only long enough to dine with some jolly fellows of the Cinque Ports Dragoons, at the new barrack, built some fifteen years ago at Piershill—"

"Once Colonel Piers' place—Piers, of the old Scotch 17th—Aberdour's Light Dragoons."

"Exactly, and then to get a relay of post-horses at Ramsay's tables. But as for staying in Edinburgh, egad! it would be intolerable to me, with its would-be dandies and its freckled women whose faces have that sweet expression imparted by the soothing influences of Presbyterianism and the east wind; and then its one street, or only half a street to promenade in, who the devil would stay there that could stay out of it? Why, not even the rhyming gauger who hailed it as 'Edina, Scotia's darling seat.'"

As his son concluded with a loud laugh, Lord Roballion shook his powdered head, for he could not endorse this unpatriotic depreciation of the Scottish metropolis, and poor Lady Winifred sighed as she glanced at a black silhouette by Miers, presented to her by the bard of Coila, with a copy of his verses in her honour; and then remembering the fancied glories of the Old Assembly Close, as she and her friend, Lady Eglinton, had seen them in her girlhood, she said:

"In my time, Cosmo, Edinburgh was wont to be gay enough."

"A sad gaiety. Thank God, mother, the Guards can never be quartered in so dull a provincial town."

"Its dulness is the effect of the Union, which removed court, council, parliament, revenue, and everything," said Lord Roballion.

"I thought most people had ceased to consider *that* a grievance," said his son, laughing again; "but I think that if Edinburgh has been dull since 1707, it must have been truly diabolical before it."

"Cosmo," said his mother, reproachfully, "I know not what some of your ancestors who fought at Flodden and Pinkey would have thought of you."

"The more fools they to fight at such places."

"Not so," said the old lord, rising, with some asperity in his tone; "God rest all who ever fought or died for Scotland and her kings; and I must tell you, Cosmo, that you will never be the better or the truer Briton for being a bad or false Scotsman!"

The master gave another of his sinister laughs; and, finding that the conversation had suddenly taken an uncomfortable turn, his father said with a smile—

"I was about to express a hope, Cosmo, that with the rank of lieutenant-colonel, you mean to settle at last, and become quiet."

"What, my lord—have I been drawing too heavily upon you and old John Girvan of late?"

"I mean that pranks which passed well enough in a subaltern, wont do in one who looks to the command of a regiment."

"Pelting the rabble with rotten eggs at Epsom, and so forth, you mean? No; in my days a sub, after pulling off half the knockers in Piccadilly, breaking all the oil lamps in Pall Mall, getting up a cry of fire in the Haymarket, and bringing out the engines to pump on the rascally mob; having, at least, one set-to with the rough and muscular democrats of the watch, would finish off by a champagne supper somewhere, and thus bring to a close a reputable London day, which, in our corps, usually begins after evening parade. Ah, my lord, you slow fellows of the King's Own Borderers knew nothing of such pranks, with your long pig-tails, your funny regimentals, and Kevenhüller hats."

"The reason, perhaps, we cocked those same hats so bravely on many a field," retorted his father. "In my days the army was the school of good-breeding, sir—but here's Jack Andrews announcing tea and devilled grouse in the inner drawing room."

"Cosmo, give your arm to Flora, if Quentin can spare her," said Lady Rohallion, smiling. "They are great friends and companions."

"Oh—ah—indeed," said the Master, sarcastically, as he gave Flora Warrender his arm. "I think I saw them exchanging strong marks of their mutual goodwill as I rode up the avenue."

Quentin grew scarlet, and Flora painfully pale at this remark, which stung her deeply, and roused her indignation.

CHAPTER XIV.

AN ABRUPT PROPOSAL.

"Wherefore dwell so sad and lonely
By the desolate sea-shore;
With the melancholy surges
Beating at your cottage door?
You shall dwell beside the castle
Shadowed by our ancient trees!
And your life shall pass as gently,
Cared for and in rest and ease."

FOR two days after his arrival the Master strove to engross as much of Flora's time as she would yield, or as he could spare from the study of his betting-book, the pages of the "Sporting Maga-

zine," playing billiards right hand against the left, quizzing the dominie, who paid him a ceremonious visit, and in relating to the quartermaster certain military "crammers" about the alterations and improvements in the service since *his* time, some of which were astounding enough to make the old fellow's pigtail stand on end, with wonder and dismay, lest the said service was going to the deuce, or further.

Quentin he seldom favoured with more notice than a cool and insolent survey through his eye-glass.

There were times when the honourable Cosmo was moody, ennuyéed, and irritable, and none knew why or wherefore; but he had frequent recourse to Mr. Spillsby, the butler, for brandy and rare dry old sherry; and he smoked a great many cigars, which were a source of marvel to all who saw them, tobacco, in that form, being almost unknown in England, till the close of the Peninsular War.

It was not ambition, or a desire to see active service that made the haughty and somewhat *blasé* Master propose to leave the household troops and begin the sliding scale from the Guards to the line; nor was it any desire to settle in life that made him enter at once and so readily into his mother's old and favourite scheme of a marriage between him and their ward, the heiress of Ardgour.

While he could not be insensible to the fresh budding beauty of Flora Warrender, the conviction that he had impaired his finances, anticipated his heritage, and had calculated to a nicety the value of all the oak, pine, and larch woods upon the estate—that each and all were numbered and known to certain hook-nosed, long-bearded, and dirty children of Judah in London—all, even to the venerable lines of sycamores in the long avenue, the pride of his father's heart—trees that for centuries had cast their shadows on his ancestors in youth, in prime, and age. While this conviction, we say, filled him with as much shame, sorrow, and repentance as he could feel, with it came the knowledge that Flora's fortune, which had accumulated during her minority, and, indeed, ever since her father's fall in Egypt, would afford him a most seasonable escape from shipwreck on several rocks which he saw ahead.

"Hah!" said Cosmo, as he tossed away the end of his cigar, "some one says truly—don't know who the devil he is—that if we could look into each other's breasts, there would be no such thing as envy in the world. Egad! I'll enter for the country heiress."

He roused himself and resolved to make the effort, all the more willingly, that to a half, or wholly *blasé* guardsman like himself, long used to the glittering banquets, the late orgies, and startling

scenes of Carlton House and the Pavilion at Brighton, the bloom, beauty, and country freshness of Flora Warrender, were indeed charming.

Flora, instinctively, and in a feminine spirit of pride and opposition to Lady Rohallion's plots and plans, kept somewhat studiously out of the Master's way—a somewhat difficult task, even in a mansion so spacious and rambling as the old castle; but on the evening of the second day after his arrival, from the stone balustraded terrace of the antique Scoto-French garden where he was smoking, Cosmo saw her light muslin dress fluttering among the narrow green alleys of the old and carefully clipped yew labyrinth, and then he hastened to join her, to the infinite mortification and chagrin of Quentin Kennedy, who had not seen her for the entire day; and who, just as he was approaching the garden, found himself anticipated, so he at once retired, leaving the field in possession of the enemy.

An older or more experienced lover would have joined them, and thus, perhaps, might have marred the plans of the Master, who, to do justice to his coolness and courage, lost no time in opening the trenches.

Midsummer was past now; the foliage of the tall sycamores, of the oakwood shaw, and other copses of Rohallion, though leafy and green, were crisped and dry; in the haughs or low-lying meadows, the mower had already relinquished his scythe; the green corn rigs were yellowing on the upland slopes "that beaked forment the sun;" next month they would be golden, brown and ready for the sickle; on bush and spray the blackbird sang cheerily, and the plover's note came shrilly out of the green and waving fern.

The sun was setting, and the screech of the white owl would ere long be heard, as he blinked and looked forth for the moon from the ivied windows of Kilhenzie. The white smokes of the hamlet on the shore of the little bay, passing up among the trees, curled into the clear air and melted over the ocean. The flowers that whilome had endured the scorch of the noonday sun, were drooping now, as if pining for the coming dew; and the stately peacocks sat listlessly, with their broad tails, argus-eyed, upon the balustrades of the garden terrace.

Inspired by the beauty of the evening, lulled by the summer hum of insect life among the flowers, and all unaware that her lover, with his gun on his shoulder and wrath in his young heart, was plunging pitilessly through some one's corn, Flora was musing or dreaming, as only a young girl dreams or muses, on what fate had in store for her now, with this new inmate of her present home. Mr. Walter Scott's new poem "Marmion" had fallen from her

hand, which was ungloved, and so, pure in whiteness and delicacy, was half hidden among her dark and wavy hair, as she reclined with her elbow upon the arm of a moss-grown seat, which yet bears the date, 1590, with the Rohallion arms and coronet, upon a hanging shield. The fingers of her left hand were playing unconsciously with the strings of her gipsy hat, which lay upon the gravel at her feet; and as the Master approached her, the young lady seemed the perfection of bloom and beauty, as she sat enshrined in the glory of the sunset that streamed along the alley of the labyrinth.

His costume was very accurate, for the gentleman and the tradesman did not then, as now, dress exactly alike, and wear exactly the same stuffs; and certainly Cosmo was looking his best, as he seated himself by her side and very deliberately took possession of her left hand, saying in a voice which he meant to be, and which had often enough proved elsewhere to be, very seductive,—

"I fear, my dear Miss Warrender, that this gloomy old barrack is not a place for you to vegetate in."

"How so, sir?" she asked, while regarding him with a quiet smile.

"It too evidently influences your naturally joyous temperament; and pardon me, you look *triste*."

"Oh, no—your mother is quite one to me, and I love Rohallion very much."

"Then as for Ardgour, I think it gloomier still."

"Some parts of Ardgour—the vaults, I believe—are said to be coeval with the Bruce's castle of Turnberry; at least so the dominie told me. Mamma so loved it; and for her sake, I love it too."

"Very proper, and very pretty; but the world of fashion—a brilliant world, of which you know nothing—should be your sphere, my dear Miss Warrender. London, Brighton, the Prince's balls at Carlton House, the parks, the theatre, the opera! You must come forth from your shell, my dear Flora, like—like—like (he thought of Venus rising from the sea, but the simile was not apt)—for you know it is absurd, positively absurd, that you should be buried alive in this horrid old-fashioned Scotch place, among rocks and rooks, ivy and ghost stories. Egad! were the house mine, I'd blow it up, and build one more suitable to the present time and its requirements."

"What! would you really uproot this fine old place of so many historic memories?"

"To the last stone! What the devil—pardon me—do old memories matter now, my dear girl? *En avant!* we should look forward—never back."

"I am sorry that your sentiments are so prosaic," said Flora, coldly.

"I trust that my mother has not filled your dear little head with her usual nonsense about Scotch patriotism, the defunct Pretender, the unlucky Union, and so forth—eh? I always said that the verses addressed to her by her rhyming friend Burns, the democratic gauger, turned her head; and this new man, Scott, with his Marmions and Minstrels, bids fair to make the disease chronic. You have no idea, Miss Warrender, how we laugh at all such stuff in London. Patriotism indeed! It doesn't pay, so Scotchmen don't adopt it, and they are wise. All patriotism *not* English is purely provincialism, and any man holding other opinions in Parliament would be as much out of place as a crusader or a cavalier. But to return to what I was saying, I should like to show you the great world that lies beyond the Craigs of Kyle and the rocky hills of Carrick—to take you back again to London."

"London is to me full of sad memories."

"Sad—the deuce—how?"

"For there my dear mother died," said Flora, lowering her voice and withdrawing her hand, while her eyes and her heart filled with emotion.

After a pause:

"I love you, dear Flora," said Cosmo, again taking possession of her hand, and placing his lips close to her shrinking ear. "Our marriage is the dearest wish of my mother's heart, as it was of yours—and, may I add, that it is the dearest hope of mine?"

'This was coming to the point with a vengeance!

Instead of being mightily flattered or overcome, as he not unnaturally expected, Flora, without withdrawing her hand, as if its retention mattered little, turned half round, and said, with a quiet calm smile:

"Remember how little I have known you, sir, save through you parents, my guardians."

"True; the duties of honour at Court, and—ah, ah!—my profession, Flora, called me elsewhere; but you don't refuse me, eh? My dear girl—the deuce!—you surely can't mean that?"

Flora grew pale and hesitated, for with all her love for Lady Rohallion, she had a kind of awe of her, and Cosmo was eyeing her coldly and steadily through his glass.

"Nay, speak, Flora," said he, with, perhaps, more irritation than tenderness in his tone. "I have, perhaps, not much personally to recommend me to a young girl's eye, and this wound, which I got at the Helder, when assisting to compel those Dutch devils to hoist the colours of the Prince of Orange

—a sabre-cut across the face—has not improved me; but speak out, Flora Warrender; notwithstanding the ties between us, you refuse me?"

"This proposal possesses all the abruptness of a scene in a drama."

"Well, what is life but an absurd drama? 'All the world's a stage, and the men and women merely players.'"

"Well, I am not inclined to play the part you wish."

"You refuse me?" he reiterated, his eyes the while assuming their wicked and lowering expression.

"I do, Cosmo Crawford," she replied, trembling very much, but speaking, nevertheless, firmly; "I do once and for ever refuse you."

Young and inexperienced though the girl was, the abrupt and systematic proposal of the Master rather insulted than flattered her.

"No tie," she added, "save a fancied one made by Lady Rohallion, ever bound us; so there are no pledges to return, no bonds, nor—I can't help laughing—hearts to break."

"And this desire to—to——" he stammered.

"It was your mother's idea alone."

"Say not so, Miss Warrender, it is mine also. Though I know that my good mother, because she jilted some fellow in her youth—my father's younger brother, I believe—thinks she makes atonement to the gods, or whoever rule these little matters of love and marriage, by making as many miserable matches, and marrying right off as many persons as she can."

"Miserable matches! So she conceived one for us. You are very encouraging and complimentary to say so just after your offer to me."

"Pardon me; but consider, my dear Flora," he resumed, while rallying a little, though sorely provoked to find himself confused and baffled by a country girl, of whose rejection he felt actually ashamed to tell his own mother, "are you not labouring under some deuced misconception in giving this very decided, and, I must say, very extraordinary refusal?"

"How?"

"Is it not, that to the affection and rank I proffer, you prefer the absurd love of a silly upstart, who shall go hence as he came hither, no one knows or cares how—a waif cast on the shore like a piece of dead seaweed, or the drowned renegade his father—a creature whose past affords no hope of a brilliant future! Speak, girl," he exclaimed, while almost savagely he grasped her wrist; "is it this that prevails with you, in opposition to the wishes of your dead mother and the whole family of Rohallion?"

"What if it is, sir?" asked Flora, haughtily, for his categorical manner offended her deeply.

"What if it is!" he repeated with lowering brow.

"Yes, sir."

"Then the cool admission ill becomes Flora Warrender of Ardgour, whose forefathers bear so high a place in the annals of their country!"

"Oh, but they were mere provincials, and their bravery or patriotism are unworthy the regard of such a citizen of the world as the Master of Rohallion," said Flora.

He sullenly threw her hand from him; but she did not retire, being loth that his family, especially the old lord, whom she dearly loved and respected, should know of this scene; and loth, too, that it should end in this unseemly fashion.

"Cursed be my mother's doting folly!" thought he, while his pale eyes alternately shrunk and dilated; "so—so, nothing but an heiress will suit our foundling, our 'Tom Jones,' for a charmer—it's vastly amusing. Confound it, a little more of this presumption will make me wring the brat's head off!"

While his cool insolence piqued Flora, her decided rejection roused all his wrath and pride; he thought of his pecuniary interest, too, so both sat silent for a time.

"Well, begad! this passes my comprehension!" he exclaimed at length, as he buttoned his accurately fitting straw-coloured kid gloves.

"To what do you refer, friend Cosmo?" asked Flora, looking at him almost spitefully.

"To this whole matter. Do you know, my fair friend, that you are perhaps the first young lady of your age that, in all my experience, ever took a fancy to a hobbledehoy lad in preference to a man; so while you reconsider the offer, you will perhaps permit me?" He bowed, and conceiving her consent given, proceeded to light a pipe, by the then very elaborate process of a small flint, steel and matches in a little silver tinder-box, on the lid of which his coat of arms was engraved. "And so you studied together, I presume, under that absurd Dominie Skail, with the knee-breeches and hugh shoe-buckles (like a heavy father at Old Drury), keen grey eyes, and Scotch cheek bones one might hang one's hat on, eh?"

"Yes," replied Flora, tying the ribbons of her gipsy hat under her dimpled chin with an angry jerk.

"And you learned Latin, Coptic, and Sanscrit together, I suppose," he continued in his cool sneering tone; "and to conjugate the verb *to love*, in all."

"Exactly so, and in Greek, Chaldaic, and Chinese, and even

so many more languages, so that we became very perfect in grammar," replied she, smiling wickedly, while the grim Master's cat-like eyes filled with a very baleful green light; yet he had not the sense to see that his operations were conducted on a wrong plan before such a fortress as the fair lady of Ardgour.

"Come, Miss Warrender, whatever we do, hang it, don't let us quarrel, and so make fools of ourselves."

"I have not the least intention of quarrelling, and trust that you have none."

"Then allow me to kiss you once, and we shall become better friends, I promise you."

"Kiss me!" exclaimed Flora, starting.

"Yes—why not—what does a little kiss signify?"

"So little that you shall never have one from me, were it to save your life," said Flora, with a burst of laughter.

"Perhaps your fair cheek has become sacred since that beggarly little rival of mine saluted it? It is a capital joke, is it not?"

"Perhaps," said Flora, reddening, and rising to withdraw; "and what then?"

"If so, I would say you were as great an idiot as my old grandmother Grizel Kennedy, of Kilhenzie, was."

"Respectful to her and polite to me! And she——"

"After Prince Charles Edward kissed her at the Holyrood ball, she never permitted the lips of mortal man—not even those of my worthy grandfather Cosmo, Lord Rohallion, K.T., and so forth, to salute her, lest the charm of the royal kiss should be broken; and their married life extended over some forty years and more."

At this apocryphal story, which has been told of more old ladies in Scotland than Grizel of Rohallion, Flora laughed heartily, as well she might; and her merriment made the Master excessively provoked.

"We are, I hope, at least friends?" said he, presenting his hand with great but grim suavity.

"Oh yes, Cosmo, the best of friends—do excuse my laughing so; but nothing more, remember, nothing more," she replied, and withdrawing her hand, which he attempted to kiss, she darted through the labyrinth towards the house, leaving "Marmion" forgotten on the gravel behind her.

"By Jove! to be baffled, laughed at, and by a chick like this!" muttered Cosmo with an oath which we care not to record, as he gave the volume a kick, and strode angrily away, full of bitter and dark thoughts, and inspired with rage at a rivalry which, in truth, he was ashamed to acknowledge, even to himself.

CHAPTER XV.

THE BLOW.

"Take comfort : he no more shall see my face;
 Lysander and myself will fly this place.
 Before the time I did Lysander see,
 Seemed Athens as a paradise to me :
 Oh, then, what graces in my love do dwell,
 That he hath turned a heaven unto a hell!"

Midsummer Night's Dream.

A VERY dark idea crossed the Master's mind, and then another, darker skill!

A few guineas judiciously bestowed among the smugglers, who, when the nights were dark and gusty, frequented the coves near the castle (and when some person or persons unknown hung a lantern over the rocks to guide their steerage through a narrow cleft in the Partan Craig), might for ever rid him of Quentin Kennedy. They could land him on the sands of Dunkirk or Boulogne, or, or—what?

Oh, no! he thrust away the *next* idea as too horrid, though *such* things had been done of old in Carrick by the lawless lairds of Auchindrane, and to denounce them, in one terrible instance, had not the sea given up its dead?

He thought of despatching a line to the lieutenant commanding the pressgang at Ayr, by whose agency poor Quentin might be shipped off for seven years' sea service in the East or West Indies, but dread of exposure, and the outcry consequent thereto, made him relinquish such kidnapping ideas of revenge, though they were practical enough in the days when George III. was king.

Revolving these thoughts, with brows knit and his stealthy eyes fixed on the ground, Cosmo quitted the garden and entered the avenue, where the evening shadows under the sycamore trees were gloomy and dark; and there as he strode forward, with a quick and impatient step, he stumbled roughly against some one, who, like himself, seemed lost in reverie.

"Quentin Kennedy!" he exclaimed in a hoarse voice, as this collision brought all his readily excited fury to the culminating point; "confound it, fellow, is this *you*?"

"I beg pardon, sir—I did not see you—I was lost in thought," replied Quentin.

"Lost in thought, were you?" repeated Cosmo, in his most insulting tone; "you were loitering near the labyrinth in the garden?" he added, with almost fierce suspicion.

"I was down in the oakwood shaw, two miles off."

"Hah—indeed! and what have *you* been doing with that gun?"

"Sir!" stammered Quentin, his natural indignation rising as he perceived the other's resolute intention of insulting him.

"I say, what the deuce have you, or such as you, to do with that gun, and on these grounds?"

Quentin drew back, haughtily, in growing anger and surprise, and fearing that the Master was mad or intoxicated, and that he was about to make an assault, he very naturally brought the fowling-piece to the position of charging.

"What, you scoundrel! would you charge me breast high?" cried the Master, choking with rage; "would you shoot me as the poacher Campbell shot Lord Eglinton on his own lands, here in Ayrshire too? I'll teach you to know your proper place, you scurvy young dog!"

With these injurious words, and before even Quentin, who was completely astounded by the wantonness of the whole affair, could be aware of his purpose, Cosmo rushed upon him, wrenched the gun away, and clubbing it, dealt the poor lad a terrible blow on the head with the heavy iron butt, stretching him senseless on the grass. Then uttering a heavy malediction, the fierce Master, still boiling with unappeased rage, passed through the ivied-gateway and entered the mansion. Having the fowling-piece in his hand, force of habit led him towards the gun-room, where he proceeded to draw the charge, for it was still loaded, and to leave it for the under gamekeeper to clean.

Perceiving that there was blood on the lock and also on his straw-coloured kid gloves, he carefully wiped the former, and threw the latter into a stove. Regret he had none for the atrocity he had just committed; but he disliked the appearance of blood, it looked ugly, he thought—dangerous, and deuced ugly.

"Egad, I hope I haven't killed the young rascal!" he muttered; "how the deuce am I to explain the affair to the old people?—they will be certain to blame me."

Stepping from the gun-room into the library, which adjoined it, he was suddenly met by Lady Rohallion, who gave him an affectionate glance, which suddenly turned to one of anxiety, as she surveyed him by the last light of the sunset, that streamed through a deeply-embayed window. With an assumed smile and some commonplace remark, he was about to pass on, shame and mortification compelling the concealment of what he had done, when she laid her hands on his arm, and said tenderly,

"Dearest Cosmo, what *has* happened—you look extremely pale?"

"Do I, mother—pale, eh?"

"Yes, and quite ruffled too," she added.

"Well, perhaps so—your friend Flora is the cause."

"Flora Warrender?"

"Yes."

"Explain, Cosmo, explain?" she asked with evident uneasiness.

"I had a long conversation with her in the garden, and it was decidedly more animated than amatory in the end."

"You quarrelled?"

"Not at all—I proposed," he replied, with a strange smile.

"And were accepted?"

"The reverse."

"Rejected—you—*my* son, rejected?"

"Finally so—or for the present shall we say?" replied Cosmo, lighting a pipe by the old and elaborate process, to conceal his agitation. "A wilful little jade she is as ever I knew. Evidently has no fancy for me, or for increasing the number of his Majesty's lieges under canvas, or for seeing the world in a baggage-waggon, as a lady attached to a regiment of the line."

The courtly old lady gazed at her son almost mournfully; for this mocking *brusquerie*, acquired in the Pavilion of the Prince Regent, but ill accorded with her old-fashioned ideas of gentle bearing.

"You have been wrong, Cosmo," said she gravely; "you have been too hasty—too abrupt."

"Now, faith, do you think so, really?"

"It was absurd to propose for any girl, especially a young lady of family and fortune, after a two days' acquaintance."

"Egad, my most respected mamma, in London, I've known a score of women of the first fashion, who would have eloped with me for better or worse, and taken post horses for Gretna, on a two hours' acquaintance."

"Oh, Cosmo!"

"So I am wrong, you think, my lady mother?"

"Decidedly; but I trust that time will put all right. I do not despair."

"Neither do I, be assured," said he, with one of his strange smiles.

"The silly girl, of course, felt flattered by your offer?"

"Not at all—one might think such matters were of daily occurrence with her."

"Did she make no consideration of our family and its anti-quity?" she asked, bridling up.

"My dear mother, it seems to be of very little importance to Flora Warrender whether the said family flourished at the court

of old King Cole, from whose grave Kyle takes its name, or at that of his Majesty of the Cannibal Islands; or at all events, she won't have me. Confound it!" he exclaimed, as if talking to himself; "to think that I, almost the pattern man of the Household Brigade—chosen by many a proud peeress to squire her through the crush of the opera; by the fighting men of the corps as their second in every affair of honour; by the Prince Regent to arrange his *déjeûners*, afternoon receptions, and crack suppers; I, the star of Fops' Alley—deemed the best stroke at billiards in London—the best hand on a tiller at Cowes, or to pull the bow-oar to Richmond; chosen to ride the most vicious brutes at Epsom and Melton, and who can hit a guinea at twenty yards with a saw-handle and a hair-trigger—that I, I say, should be outflanked by a country booby passes my comprehension, unless, as in old King James's days, there be witchcraft again in the Bailiwick of Carrick! To be jockeyed by a country lout and a lass of eighteen—deucedly disgusting! Thank heaven! this can never be known in town, or how would the lady-killing Cosmo be roasted! I think I hear Paget of the Hussars, and the rest of our set laughing over it; and, by Jove, they would laugh too, until I had one or two of them *out* at Chalk Farm for a morning appetiser."

"How this little rebuff nettles you! Take courage, Cosmo," said his mother, almost laughing at his angry and odd enumeration of his many good qualities.

"Well, I have changed my mind many times; so do women, and so may Flora. This is a boy's love; she will tire of his *idea*, and then is my time to cut in and win in a canter. You, my dear mother, yourself once loved, before my father proposed——"

"Stay," said Lady Rohallion, interrupting, with sudden agitation, and hastening angrily to change the unwelcome topic; "a sudden light breaks upon me! Cosmo, on the night you arrived, it seemed to me you spoke very oddly of Flora Warrender and Quentin Kennedy."

"How—about something in the avenue, was it?"

"Yes; that you had seen them exchanging marks of their mutual good will, or words to that effect."

"Exactly so, my Lady Rohallion," said Cosmo, slowly emitting the smoke of his pipe.

"What *did* you mean, Cosmo?" she demanded, with increasing asperity.

"Much more than I said, mother."

"That you saw Quentin kissing Flora?"

"Or Flora kissing Quentin, my dear lady mother, I don't think it makes much difference," said he, with an angry laugh, while she

almost trembled with indignation ; "but what do you think of your amiable ward and your protégé—a lively young fellow, isn't he?"

"I ought to have been prepared for this," said Lady Rohallion ; "indeed, Eleonora Eglinton forewarned me that something of this kind might happen. A separation by school, college, or something else, should have been made whenever Flora came here. I must consult Rohallion, and have such arrangements made for Quentin as shall prevent his interference with the views we have so long cherished for our only son. The foolish girl—the presumptuous boy—to be actually kissing her!"

"Shameful, isn't it?" said Cosmo, who had been despatched somewhat precipitately into the Guards for making love to his mother's maids.

"Such vagaries must be controlled and punished."

"He should have been gazetted a year ago to a West India Regiment, or one of the eight Hottentot Battalions at the Cape; they are quite good enough for such as he; or send him still-hunting with a line regiment into Ireland, where slugs from behind a hedge may send him to the devil before his time."

"Oh, fie, Cosmo, you are cruel and unjust;" but she added bitterly as pride of birth, her only failing or weakness, got the mastery for the moment; "no unknown waif, no nameless person like this youth Kennedy shall come between my son, the Master of Rohallion, and our long cherished purpose—no, assuredly! Andrews," she added, raising her voice, as the thin, spare military valet passed through the library, "desire Miss Warrender to speak with me in the yellow drawing-room, before the bell rings for supper."

Then leaving her son, Lady Rohallion swept out of the library to have a solemn interview with her ward.

The last flush of sunset had died away, and one by one the stars were shining out.

The night wore on, and nothing was seen or heard of Quentin. Indeed, save the Master, as yet no one missed him; but as he did not appear when the supper-bell clanged in the belfry of the old keep, Cosmo, with several unpleasant misgivings in his mind, hastened unseen into the avenue, down the long vista of which the waning moon shed a broad and pallid flood of radiance, ere, in clouds that betokened a rough night, it sunk beyond the wooded heights of Ardour.

Cosmo went to the place where so savagely he had struck the poor lad down; but Quentin was gone; the grass where he had lain was bruised, and on the gravel was a pool of blood about a foot in diameter—blood that must have flowed from the wound in his head; but other trace of him there was none!

CHAPTER XVI.

EXPOSTULATION.

"Pledged till thou reach the verge of womanhood,
And shalt become thy own sufficient stay!
Too late I feel, sweet orphan! was the day
For steadfast hope the contract to fulfil;
Yet still my blessing hover o'er thee still."—*Wordsworth.*

LADY ROHALLION had so frequently spoken to Flora Warrender on the subject of the proposed or expected marriage with Cosmo, that she had little diffidence generally in approaching the subject; but now there was a new and unexpected feature in the matter—a lover, a rival—thus she felt aware that the adoption of some tact became requisite.

What the good lady could hope to achieve, where her enterprising son had failed in person, it is difficult to imagine; nevertheless, she resolved to remonstrate with Flora.

"She is too young to judge for herself, and must therefore let others judge for her," said she, half aloud.

"You wished to see me, madam," said Flora, entering with an air of annoyance, only half concealed by a smile, as she correctly feared this formal summons had reference to the recent scene in the garden.

Seating Flora beside her on a sofa, she took her by the hand, and while considering what to say, played caressingly with her dark wavy hair, and said something in praise of her beauty, so the girl's heart foreboded what was coming next.

"You are rich, dear Flora," said Lady Rohallion, insinuatingly, "but most, perhaps, in beauty."

"I am often told so, especially by you," replied Flora, laughing.

"An heiress, too."

"But what of it, madam?" she asked, gravely.

"You know, dear Flora, that money is the key to a thousand pleasures—it is alike the object of the avaricious, and the ambition of the poor."

"True, Lady Rohallion," replied Flora, smiling again; "but, as we say in Scotland, a tocherless lass, though she may have a long pedigree, may have a pleasure that no heiress can ever enjoy."

"Indeed?"

"Yes; the most flattering and glorious conviction!"

"Pray tell me?"

"She can prove to her heart's content that she is loved for herself, and herself alone. Poverty makes all equal——"

"True; but so does wealth," interrupted Lady Rohallion, annoyed by her own mismanagement in the beginning. "You are rich, but my son is also rich, and he loves you, Flora, well, truly, and devotedly."

"And have two days sufficed to summon all this truth and devotion?"

"Flora, Flora, you are well aware that it has been an old purpose and hope, between your parents and his, to unite or cement their old hereditary friendship by a stronger tie, and that this intended marriage has been an object of solicitude to all——"

"Save to those most interested in it—myself especially."

"Do not say so, my dear child—the match is most suitable."

A gesture of annoyance escaped Flora, but Lady Rohallion resumed:

"Our families have known each other so long; it has been a friendship of three generations—Cosmo and you suit each other so admirably; and then the Ardgour lands run the whole length of the Bailiwick with our own."

"The most convincing argument of all," replied Flora, in a tone which made Lady Rohallion colour deeply, and the secret annoyance of both was gradually rising to a height, though each strove to conceal it.

"Consider our family, Flora!" exclaimed Lady Winifred, haughtily; "look at that gilded vane on yonder turret. It bears a date—1400; in that year, Sir Ranulph, first baron of Rohallion, was made Hereditary Admiral of the Firth of Clyde, from Glasgow Bridge to Ailsa Craig, by the Regent Duke of Albany. We are not people of yesterday!"

Flora failed to perceive what this aqueous office had to do with her or her affairs.

"In three years," she began, "I shall cease to be your ward——"

"Three, by your father's will, Flora."

"So do not let us embitter those three remaining years, my dear madam, by this project, a constant recurrence to which serves but to excite and pique by the attempt to control me."

"I trust, my dear but wilful Flora, that we have not been unjust stewards in the execution of the trust your worthy parents bequeathed to us, and if the hope of a nearer and dearer connexion——"

"Your son, the Master, is a brave and noble gentleman, I grant you," interrupted Flora, with quiet energy; "but save in name, we have been almost strangers to each other, and he is so

many years my senior, that when we last met he treated me quite as a little girl—a child! Our tastes, habits, manners, and temper are all dissimilar; ah, madam, pardon me, but I never could love him!”

“Never love Cosmo—*my* Cosmo?” said Lady Rohallion, with indignant surprise.

“Never as a husband, though dearly as a friend.”

“Fancy, all! You would love him with all a true wife’s devotion ere long. In girls of your age, love always comes after marriage, it is unnecessary before it. You little know how dear and loveable he is, and how gallant too! What wrote Sir Ralph Abercrombie to the Duke of York concerning him, after that affair at the Helder? ‘The bravery of the Honourable Captain Crawford, of the 3rd Guards, in the action of the 27th instant, forms one of the most brilliant episodes of the war in Holland!’”

Flora gave an almost imperceptible shrug of her white shoulders, for praises of Cosmo’s valour at the Helder had been a daily story of the old lady for some time past. Slight though the shrug and the smile that accompanied it, Lady Rohallion detected them, and her eyes sparkled brightly with anger. She arose with ineffable hauteur, and shook out her flounces, as a swan ruffles its pinions, to their fullest extent.

“Miss Warrender,” said she, with her hands folded before her and her powdered head borne very erect indeed, “is it possible that this strange opposition alike to the earnest wishes of the living and of the dead, arises from a cause which I have hitherto disdained to approach or to allude to—as a species of midsummer madness—a love for the luckless lad to whom for so many years we have extended the hand of protection, Quentin Kennedy?”

At the name which concluded this formal exordium, a deep blush suffused the delicate neck of Flora; but, as her back was to the lighted candles, the questioner did not perceive it, though scrutinizing her keenly.

“And why, madam, may I not love poor Quentin if I choose?” asked the wilful Flora, bluntly.

“Because he is, as you justly named him, *poor*,” replied the other, with calm asperity.

“But I am rich,” urged Flora, laughing through all her annoyance, with an irresistible desire to pique Lady Rohallion.

“He is nameless.”

“How know we that, madam? Kennedy is as good a name as Warrender.”

“True, when borne by an Earl of Cassilis, by a Laird of Colzean, of Kilhenzie, or Dunure; but not by every landless waif who bears the name of the clan or family. God knoweth how in

my heart I dearly love that boy ; yet this fancy of yours passes all bounds of reason, and all my expectations, in its absurdity. I have destined you for my son Cosmo, and none other shall have you !" she added, almost imperiously.

"Destined," said Flora, with mingled laughter and chagrin, "because the march-dyke of Rohallion is also the march-dyke of Ardour."

"Nay, nay, think not so unworthily of us ; *we* need to covet nothing and to court none ; but destined you are, because it was your dear mother's dying wish."

"To make me miserable ?"

"To make you happy, foolish girl ; dare you speak of misery with *my* son ?"

"So you would actually have me to marry a man I don't like, and scarcely ever saw ? It is a common sacrifice in the great world, I am aware ; but my sphere has been rather small——"

"You would not marry a boy, surely ?"

"I may at least love him," replied Flora, simply ; "and I have no wish to marry at all—just now, at least."

"This is the very stuff of which your novels are made !" exclaimed Lady Rohallion, crimsoning with passion, and raising her voice in a manner quite unusual to her. "Mercy on me ! I wonder why I have never detected Quentin at your feet, on his knees before you, for that I believe is the true and most approved mode ; but we know nothing of him, he may be base-born for aught that we can tell, and Lord Rohallion shall learn that Quentin Kennedy—a brat, a very beggar's brat—shall never come between our own son and his success ; and so, young lady, your humble servant !"

And inflamed by genuine passion, Lady Rohallion, as she uttered this unpleasant speech, (which, to do her justice, was scarcely uttered ere repented for) in a loud and imperious tone, swept away with a haughty bow, in all her amplitude of black satin, and with that hauteur of bearing which made the Scottish gentlewomen of her day so stately and imposing.

Her words, the fiery glance of anger she darted at Flora, and the tenor of the expostulation proved too much for the temper or the nerves of that young lady, who on being left to herself, burst into a passion of tears.

But a hand was laid on the lock of the door, as if some one was about to enter ; and fearing it might be the Master, she started up and escaped by another door to her own apartment.

CHAPTER XVII.

FORTH INTO THE WORLD.

"This nichti s my departing nicht,
 For here nae langer I maun stay;
 There's neither friend or foe o' mine,
 But wishes me away.
 What I hae dune through lack o' wit,
 I never, never can reca';
 I hope you're a' my friends as yet—
 Gude nicht, and joy be wi' ye a'."

Johnnie Armstrong's Good Night.

THE knock-down blow given to Quentin by the butt-end of the clubbed fowling-piece, besides inflicting a severe wound which bled profusely, stunned him completely for a time, and in this condition he was found by the quartermaster, who was returning from having a jug of punch and a quiet rubber with our quaint friend the dominie at his little thatched cottage in the village.

Great were the alarm and concern of the kind-hearted veteran when he found his young friend and favourite in a condition so pitiable. He raised him, tied a handkerchief over his wound to stanch the bleeding; then gradually as consciousness returned, Quentin remembered all that had occurred, and told Girvan of his meeting with the Master—the unmerited and unexpected insolence of the latter, his sudden assault, and that was all he knew.

The disquiet of the ex-quartermaster was greatly increased on hearing of a *fracas* so unseemly and so dangerous, and he knew in a moment that it contained *more* elements of discord than Quentin admitted or perhaps knew; though he was ignorant of the Master's abrupt proposal, the garden scene, and of the subsequent expostulation, which was in progress at that moment, and which we have detailed in the preceding chapter.

"I can't blame you, my boy," said the old soldier, half communing with himself, and shaking his head till his pigtail swung like a pendulum; "I can't blame ye," he repeated, as he gave Quentin his arm, and together they walked slowly towards the castle; "ye are young—the temptation is great, though I hae long since forgotten all of such matters, save that love-making tendeth to mischief."

"Quartermaster," stammered Quentin, "I don't understand, what——"

"But I do! The devilment first began in Father Adam's garden, and it will go on so long as the world wags."

Quentin coloured deeply, and his heart leaped with mingled rage and exultation—rage at the Master for the injury he had done him, and exultation for its cause—jealousy, by which he was assured that Flora loved him, despite all the attention and the greater attractions of the *blasé* guardsman.

But what was to be done now?

To remain longer under the same roof with the Master of Rohallion was impossible; but whither was he to go? The quartermaster, without adverting further to what he too well knew to be the secret spring or moving cause of a quarrel so sudden and unbecoming in its details, hurried Quentin to his secluded little quarters, "the snuggery," already described as existing in a tower of the castle. There he gave him a glass of sherry and water as a reviver, sponged and cleansed, with ready and kindly hands, his face and hair from the clotted blood which disfigured them, applied with soldier-like promptitude a piece of court-plaster to the cut, and brushed a lock or so gently over to conceal it.

That Lady Rohallion must be informed of the encounter and have it explained away, if possible; that the Master should be urged to apologize to Quentin (a very improbable hope); and that they should be made to shake hands and commit the affair to oblivion, was the mode in which the worthy ground-bailie proposed to solder up this untoward affair. Quentin was long inexorable, and with the fury of youth vowed to have some mysterious and terrible revenge; but gradually the inexpediency, the impropriety, and impossibility of obtaining reparation by the strong hand dawned upon him, and he consented to leave the matter in the hands of Girvan—to have it explained gently to Lady Rohallion, and leave her to be the mediator between them.

On being informed by Jack Andrews that she was in the yellow drawing-room, and as there was still an hour to spare before the supper bell rang, they proceeded thither to have an interview with her.

While passing through the outer drawing-room, which was quaintly furnished with *marqueterie* cabinets, tables, and book-cases, with chairs and *fauteuils* of Queen Anne's time, they heard voices in the inner apartment, and one of them was Lady Rohallion's, pitched in a louder key than was her wont, so they paused, unfortunately, only to hear the LAST words of her conversation with Flora—words which fell like molten lead on the ears and in the heart of the listener whom they most concerned.

"—We know nothing of him—he may be base-born for aught that we can tell, and Lord Rohallion shall learn that Quentin Kennedy—a brat, a very beggar's brat—shall never come between

our own son and his success—and so, young lady, your humble servant!”

These bitter, bitter words—words such as he had never heard from *her* lips before, made Quentin reel as if stunned, so that with the effect they produced upon him, added to that of the recent blow, he would have fallen had not the quartermaster caught him in his arms, and held him up, surveying him the while with a kind and father-like expression of solicitude and bewilderment in his old and weather-worn visage.

Rousing himself, with his teeth set and his eyes flashing, he made three efforts to turn the door handle and enter the room.

It was *his* hand that Flora had heard upon the lock when she started from the sofa and fled to her own apartment in a passion of tears, so that when he entered the inner drawing-room it was empty, and thus Quentin knew not—though his heart foreboded—to whom the injurious words of Lady Rohallion had been addressed; but their tenor decided him at once in a preconceived intention of leaving, and for ever, the only home he had now in the world, and almost the only one of which he had any distinct memory.

“This is no longer a place for me, John Girvan, and so sure as God sees and hears me, I shall leave it this very night!” he exclaimed, as with his eyes flashing and full of tears, and his heart now filled only by new, and hitherto unknown emotions of sorrow, bitterness, and mortification (unknown to him at least) he walked to and fro upon the gun-battery, where the 24-pounders of *La Bonne Citoyenne* faced the waves of the Firth, on which the last rays of a waning moon were shining coldly and palely, especially on the ridge of foam that boiled for ever over the Partan Craig.

“And whither would ye go, Quentin?” asked Girvan, who felt in his honest heart an intense commiseration for the lonely lad, knowing that were he to remain after the insult he had received, and the words he had heard, it would argue a poverty of spirit he would be loth to find in Quentin; “whither would ye go?”

“Away to France, to seek my mother.”

“Impossible—it’s hostile ground, and once on it you would be made a prisoner by the authorities, and shut up in Bitche, Verdun, or Brisgau, if they did not hang you as a spy, or send you to serve as a private soldier in the *Corps Étranger*. You must think of another scheme, less rash and romantic.”

“I know of none.”

“In all the wide world, Quentin,” said Girvan, with his nether lip quivering, “ye have no home but this.”

“*This!*” repeated Quentin, grinding his teeth.

“Yes.”

"Well—I care not; I will go anywhere from it—the farther away the better!" (And Flora? suggested his heart.)

In vain the quartermaster urged him to do nothing rashly, and to await the return of Lord Rohallion, who had ridden over to Eglinton castle, to visit his old friend and American comrade, Earl Hugh, who had just returned from London; but pride and passion, with a conviction that the mother's unwonted bitterness was only a supplement to the son's insulting conduct, seemed to dissolve all the ties that had bound Quentin to Rohallion and its family.

These emotions of anger had full swing in his heart. What Lady Rohallion had said, the old lord must, he argued, have heard repeatedly, and may often have thought; and so, forth—forth to seek his bread elsewhere, he would go before the clocks struck midnight.

Mentally he vowed and resolved, that the first hour of another morning should see him far in search of a new home.

Deluding good John Girvan by some excuse, he slipped to his own room and packed a few necessities in a small portmanteau, feeling, while he did so, a sense of mortification that they were the gifts of those whom, in justice to himself, he was compelled to leave. His watch, a ring, a breast-pin, and other trinkets given to him by Lady Rohallion, he laid upon his dressing-table, leaving them in token that he took with him nothing but what was absolutely necessary.

The time was an hour and a half from midnight. Unheeding he had heard the supper-bell clanged long ago, and cared not what any one—Flora excepted—thought of his absence now. Opening a window, he looked forth upon the night. The moon had waned, and the atmosphere was thick and gusty—yea, nearly as stormy and as wild as on that night when he had been washed ashore on the sand of the bay below Rohallion.

Putting his purse in his pocket—it contained but a half-guinea, he gave a last glance at his bed-room—to leave it with all its familiar features cost him a pang; there were some of Lady Rohallion's needlework, and sketches by Flora, books lent him by the dominie, gloves and foils that had borne the dint of many a bout between him and John Girvan; quaint shells given to him by Elsie Irvine, and many little trophies of his shooting expeditions with the gamekeeper, and so forth. He quitted the room with a sigh, and slipping downstairs reached the hall-door unseen by any of the household.

"And now a long farewell to Rohallion!" he exclaimed, as he reached the ivied arch of the haunted gate.

"Not so fast, Quentin," said a voice, and the rough hand of the worthy quartermaster grasped his.

"John Girvan," said Quentin, with emotion.

"I thought it would come to this. So you are really about to take French leave of us—to levant in the night, and without beat of drum?"

"Yes."

"To go out into the wide world?"

"Yes."

"I knew it would be thus, for I knew your spirit, Quentin, and so have been keeping guard here at the gate."

"Guard—for what purpose? To stop me?"

"No."

"What then?"

"To aid and help ye, Quentin, laddie," said Girvan, placing a heavy purse in his hand. "I have saved something here, forty guineas or so, off my half-pay, take them and use them cautiously, wi an auld man's blessing—an auld soldier's, if you like it better."

"Girvan—John Girvan," said Quentin, with a very troubled voice; "I cannot—I cannot——"

"What?"

"Deprive you of what I may never be able to repay."

"Ye must and ye shall take the money, or I'll fling it into the Lollard's Linn!" said the other, impetuously. "It was I who laid your father's head in the grave, laddie, in the auld kirkyard yonder in the glen, and ill would it become auld John Girvan, of the 25th, to let his son go forth to seek his fortune in this cold hard world, portionless and penniless, while there was a shot in the locker—a lad I love, too!"

"But the repayment, John Girvan, the repayment."

"Heed not that—it will come time enough; and if it never comes I'll never miss it; but ye'll write to me from the next burgh-town, wont ye, Quentin, laddie?"

"I shall, John—I shall," replied Quentin, now so softened that he sobbed with his face on the old man's shoulder.

"God bless ye, my bairn—God bless ye!"

"And you, John."

"You'll think o' me sometimes."

"Oh, could I ever forget?"

"Sorely will *she* repent this at my lord's home-coming," said Girvan, bitterly.

"My father was an ill-starred wanderer, and perished miserably, poor man! What right have I to hope for, or to look for, a better fate than he? My mother, too. . . . Do they see me now, and know of all this? . . . And Flora—dear Flora, whom I shall see no more!"

"Take a dram ere you go, laddie, for the night is dark and

H

erie," said Girvan, producing a flask from his pocket; "'a spur in the head is weel worth twa on the heels,' says an auld Scots proverb."

"You will bid the dominie good-bye for me."

"That shall I, laddie—that shall I."

"And tell—tell *her*, that I have gone forth to seek my fortune, and—and——"

His voice failed him, so he slung his little portmanteau on his shoulder, and wrung the hand of his kind friend for the last time. Hurrying away, he disappeared in the darkness, and, as he did so, a sound that followed on the wind made him pause, but for an instant.

It was the old quartermaster sobbing like a child.

So, thus went Quentin Kennedy forth into the world.

"Few words," says a charming writer, "are more easily spoken than *He went forth to seek his fortune*; and what a whole world lies within the narrow compass! a world of high-hearted hopes and doubting fear; of noble ambition to be won and glorious paths to be trod, mingled with tender thoughts of home and those who made it such. What sustaining courage must be his who dares this course, and braves that terrible conflict—the toughest that ever man fought—between his own bright colouring of life, and the stern reality of the world. How many hopes has he to abandon—how many illusions to give up. How often is his faith to be falsified and his trustfulness betrayed; and, worst of all, what a fatal change do these trials impress upon himself—how different is he from what he had been."

Bitterness tinged the spirit of Quentin Kennedy with an impression of fatalism, and he marched mournfully, doggedly on.

CHAPTER XVIII.

UNAVAILING REGRET.

"Ay waken oh!

Waken and wearie;

Sleep I canna get

For thinking o' my dearie.

When I sleep I dream,

And when I wake I'm eerie;

Rest I canna get,

For thinking o' my dearie."—*Old Scots Song.*

WHEN, three days after these events, Lord Rohallion returned home from his visit to Eglinton and to his brave old comrade—the "Sodger Hugh" of Burns' poem—he found the members of

his household in a considerable state of consternation and excitement. This was consequent to the sudden and mysterious disappearance of his favourite, Quentin Kennedy; but gradually the whole story came out in all its details, even to the crushing observation, so unfortunately and unintentionally overheard by the lad and the quartermaster in the outer drawing room.

Lord Rohallion was very indignant with his son for making an attack so unprovoked as the affair in the avenue, which, to do him justice, the Master described truly enough. He was seriously angry with Lady Winifred for speaking so ungenerously of his young favourite, and with the quartermaster too, for permitting, even aiding, him in the means of flight.

Now, three days had elapsed and no tidings had been heard of him; but there were no railroads or steamers in those days, or other means of locomotion than the occasional stage-coaches and carriers' waggons, so the family supposed that he could not be very far off.

The Master was sullen, resenting all this interest as an insult to himself, so he spent the whole day abroad in search of grouse and ptarmigan, and had even ordered his valet to pack up and prepare for returning to London, an order which that powdered gentleman of the aiguillette heard with extreme satisfaction, "the hair of Hayrshire by no means agreeing with his constitution," while the "red hands and big beetle-crushers of the women were by no means to his taste."

It was evident to Cosmo that Flora entertained a horror of him; and now that her anger had fully subsided and emotions of alarm replaced it, Lady Rohallion mourned for the poor lad repenting of the past, and trembling for the unknown future.

"A plague on your planning and match-making, Winny," said her husband, as they sat together on the old stone seat in the garden, late on the third evening after Quentin had disappeared; "I never knew any good come of that sort of thing."

"You know, Reynold, how long this proposed marriage has been a favourite scheme of ourselves and the Warrenders," she urged, gently.

"But you were—pardon me, Winny, dear—too officious or energetic; and Cosmo has been most reprehensibly rash!"

"Ah, don't say so!"

"I must! Had you left the girl to herself, this romantic fancy for her early playmate had soon been forgotten, or merged in a woman's love for Cosmo, and his proposal had been accepted, as I hope it yet shall be. Woman change, don't they, sometimes?" he added, with a sly twinkle in his eyes.

"Yes; but there must be reasons," said she, hesitatingly.

"Of course—of course."

"From the hints that Cosmo gave of what he had seen or overheard, I deemed it right to interfere."

"An error, I think; couldn't you let the young folks alone? Heaven knows, many a girl I kissed, in my first red coat and epaulettes," said Rohallion, while knocking the gravel about with his silver-headed cane.

"But Cosmo does so love that girl."

"Love her?" said Rohallion, laughing.

"Yes."

"Then it must be after some odd fashion of his own."

"How, my lord?"

"Why, zounds! Cosmo has passed unscathed through the perils of too many London seasons to be bird-limed by a country belle like Flora, beautiful though she be. She is not the style of girl that passes muster with the Household Brigade, I fear."

"Flora Warrender?"

"I mean that she is too genuine—too unsophisticated—in fact, I don't know what I mean,—somewhat of a character, if you will; and then, Quentin—poor Quentin——"

"Poor dear boy! pray don't upbraid me more, Reynold," she urged with tears.

"I do not mean to do so, Winny."

"I remember him only as the sweet little prattling child, saved from the wreck on that wild and stormy night; and I love him dearly, as if he were our own; he was full of affection and gentleness!" she continued, covering her face with her handkerchief.

"And yet you trampled on him, Winny," said Lord Rohallion, taking a pinch of Prince's mixture with great energy, and making his hair-powder fly about like a floury halo, "trampled upon him as if he had been a beggar's cur—he a soldier's son!"

"Oh, Reynold, upbraidings again!"

"It wasn't like you, Winny, dear—it wasn't like you."

"My deep interest in Cosmo's welfare, provocation at Quentin, and the extreme wilfulness of Flora, all served to bewilder me. I own that I was wrong, and not quite myself; but the dear bairn is gone, Reynold, gone from our roof-tree, and sorrow avails not."

"He was so good, so gentle, of so sweet a disposition," said Lord Rohallion, musingly; "always doing kind offices for everybody. Egad! I've seen him carrying horse-buckets for the old groom in the stable-court, because the man was feeble and ailing; but here come the dominie and John Girvan—perhaps they have news. Good evening, dominie. Any tidings of the deserter, Girvan?"

The kind-hearted dominie, who since Quentin's disappearance

had been as restless as if his galligaskins had been lined with Lieutenant Janies's horse-blister, shook his head mournfully, while lifting his old-fashioned three-cornered hat, and bowing thrice to the lady, who presented him with her lace-mittened hand.

"I have just been telling Lady Rohallion that I thought she was unnecessarily severe, and I regret very much, Girvan, that Quentin overheard those casual words in the drawing-room—words lightly spoken, and not meant for him to hear."

"Poor lad! as for his falling in love with Miss Warrender, it was quite natural," said the quartermaster; "how could you expect aught else, my lady?"

"True—true," replied Lady Winifred, with an air of extreme annoyance at having private family matters openly canvassed by dependents; but the affair had gone beyond their own control now; "propinquity is frequently fatal."

"Prop—what? I dinna quite comprehend, my lady; but this I know, that if a winsome young pair are left for ever together——"

"That is exactly what I mean, Girvanmains," interrupted the lady, with cold dignity.

"Well—it is pretty much like leaving a lighted match near gunpowder; there will be a blow-up some time when least expected."

"May you not be all wrong in your views of this matter?" said Lord Rohallion, who somewhat shared his wife's feeling of annoyance; "I must question Miss Warrender herself; I feel assured that she will conceal nothing from me."

"Not even that she allowed this sprightly young fellow to kiss her in the avenue, eh?" said the sneering voice of the Master, who appeared suddenly at the back of the stone chair, which he had approached unseen, and whereon he lounged with a twig in his mouth, and a Newmarket hat knowingly depressed very much over his right eye. "It was very pretty and becoming, wasn't it, dominie? ha! ha!"

"Cosmo!" exclaimed his mother, with positive anger.

"*Osculatio*—a kissing match—eh, dominie?"

"There may be no harm in a kiss, my good sir," said the pedant, gravely, for though mightily shocked, as became the preceptor of Rohallion kirk, on hearing of such undue familiarity, he felt himself bound to defend his young pupil and friend.

"No harm, you think?"

"Indubitably not."

"A rare old put it is! But what do such little favours lead to?"

"They may lead to reconciliation, as when the king kissed Absalom; or be the token of welcome, as when Moses kissed his

father-in-law ; or they may indicate homage, as we find in the book of Esther."

"And what about the kiss of Judas, dominie, when on such matters?" continued the sneering Cosmo.

"That I leave you, sir, to discover; but that there may be nothing wrong in the act itself, I can refer you to Genesis, Hosea, and all the sacred writings, which abound in solemn salutes by the lip, so that the kiss of Quentin may have been a pure and sinless one."

The dominie gave the fore-cock of his hat a twist with his hand, as if he had settled the matter, while Lord Rohallion, notwithstanding his annoyance, could not but join his son in a hearty laugh at the serious earnestness of the defence.

"You will have a vigorous search made for Quentin Kennedy," said he; "despatch messengers in every direction, John Girvan; spare neither trouble nor money, but bring the young rogue back to us."

"That shall I do blithely, my lord," replied the quartermaster, as he and the dominie made their bows and retired, while Cosmo curled his thin lips; and after a pause, uttered one of his harsh and unpleasant mocking laughs.

"The Master has the eyebrows of a wicked man, or I am no physiognomist—grieved am I to say so, dominie," whispered Girvan, as they walked away together.

"Ye are right, John, the *intercilium* is covered with hair, whilk I like not, though Petronius and Ovid call such eyebrows the chief charm of the other sex;

"Ye fill by art your eyebrows' vacant space,"

saith the latter. It is an auld—auld notion that beetle-brows indicate an evil temper—a crafty and fierce spirit; and of a verity the Master Cosmo hath both."

"Who the deuce could have anticipated such a blow-up as this?"

"About a woman! Pah! women," said the dominie, cynically, "according to a German philosopher, are only like works carved of fine ivory; nothing is whiter or smoother, and nothing sooner turns yellow."

"Are ye sure he was not a Roman philosopher?" asked the quartermaster, drily.

"I am; yet Petronius and Ovid both say——"

"Bother them both, dominie! leave Greek roots and Latin verbs alone, *now* that the poor boy is gone—God bless and watch over him! I know he'll ever have a warm corner in his heart for us both, and that, go wherever he may, he'll neither forget

you nor the poor old quartermaster ; but now to have a glass of grog, and then to set about this search that my lord has ordered—a search which I know right well will prove a bootless one.”

A vigorous pursuit and inquiry along all the highways were now instituted. Girvan, the dominie, the gardener, gamekeepers, grooms, Jack Andrews, Irvin the fisherman, the running footman, the parish minister on his puffy Galloway cob, and even Spillsby, the portly and unwieldy butler, were all despatched in various directions to the neighbouring farms, mansions and villages without avail.

John Legat, usually known in the Bailiwick as *Lang Leggie*, the running footman (for one of those officials still lingered in the old-fashioned household of Rohallion), scoured all Kyle and Cunninghame, with hard boiled eggs and sherry in the silver bulb, that topped his long cane, scarcely pausing to imbibe these, his sustenance when on duty ; and though he returned thrice to the castle, he was despatched like a liveried Mercury, thrice again, but without hearing tidings of the missing one.

Since the last Duke of Queensberry (“old Q.”), who died in 1810, Lord Rohallion was perhaps the last Scottish peer who retained such an old state appendage as a running footman.

Long did they all, save the sullen master, hope, and even flatter themselves, that the wanderer would return ; but days became weeks, and no trace could be discovered and no tidings were heard of him anywhere.

An armed lugger that did not display her colours, but was very foreign in her build and in the rake of her masts, had been seen standing off and on near Rohallion Head. About midnight she was close in shore, steering clear of the Partan Craig, and burning a blue light. By sunrise she was far off at sea : could he have gone with *her* ?

There had been a numerous and somewhat lawless body of gipsies encamped near the oak-wood shaw on the night of his disappearance, for the ashes of their night-fires had been found, together with well-picked bones and broken bottles, the usual *débris* of their suppers *al fresco* ; but there were other traces more alarming : several large pools of blood which showed that there had been a fight—perhaps murder—committed among them. These wanderers had departed by sunrise, and passed beyond the craigs of Kyle, where all traces of them were lost. The quartermaster thought of the money he had given Quentin, and trembled lest the gold had only ensured his destruction, till the dominie reassured him by remembering that there were more Kennedies than Faas among those gipsies, and the former would be sure to protect him for the sake of his name.

On that night, too, the pressgang from Ayr had been more than ten miles inland, in search of certain seamen who had sought refuge as farm labourers; so this knowledge was another source of fear, as there was a great demand for men, and the officers were not very particular.

There had been a recruiting party beating up for various regiments in the Bailiwick of Cunninghame, and it had been at Maybole on the night after Quentin fled. The party had marched, no one could say whether for Edinburgh or Glasgow. Could Quentin have enlisted?

The night was a dark and stormy one; could he have lost his way and perished in the Doon or the Girvan, both of which were swollen by the recent rains? This was barely possible, as he knew the country so well.

There were no electric wires to telegraph by, no rural police to apply to, and no penny dailies to advertise in. People travelled still by an armed stage or the carrier's waggon, just as their great-grandfathers did in the days of Queen Anne. Twanging his horn as he went or came, the Riding Post was still, as in *Cowper's Task*.

“——the herald of a noisy world,
With spattered boots, strapped waist, and frozen locks,
News from all nations lumbering at his back.”

Posts came and went from the capital of the Bailiwick, but there were no tidings of Quentin, so the Master of Rohallion laughed in secret at all the exertions, doubts, and fears of those around him.

Every alarming idea was naturally suggested. The quartermaster's early instincts made him think most frequently of the recruiting party; but he grieved at the idea of the friendless and homeless lad, so delicately nurtured and gently bred, enduring all he had himself endured—the hardships and privations of a private soldier's life; while the kind-hearted dominie actually shed tears behind his huge horn barnacles at the bare thought of such a thing, and mourned for all his wasted classic lore.

Aware that she had been in some measure the primary cause of Quentin's expulsion from Rohallion, Flora Warrender had rather a difficult part to play now. To conceal entirely that she mourned for him would be to act a part which she disdained; but when she spoke with sorrow or anxiety, she excited the sarcasms of Cosmo, and even a little pique in Lady Winifred, who more than once said to her, almost with asperity, “Flora, you should have known your own position, and made Quentin

remember his; then all these unseemly events had never taken place."

"How, madam?"

"You should at once have put an end to this mooning and tomfoolery. Do you hear me?"

"Yes, madam," sighed Flora, who seemed to be intent on a book, though she held it upside down.

"How cool—how composed you are!"

"Less so, perhaps, than I seem," replied Flora, who felt that tears were suffusing her eyes.

"Young ladies took these matters very differently in my time; but since this revolution in France, manners are strangely altered. (Here we may mention that the epoch referred to was now superseding the Union in Lady Rohallion's mind.) Tears!" she continued; "I am glad to see them, at least for your own sake."

"They are *not* for my own sake, Lady Rohallion, but for the sake of poor Quentin, who has fallen under the displeasure of you all, and who, through my unwitting means, has—has—become——"

"What?"

"Homeless, friendless, and alone! Oh, it must be so sad to be alone in the world—all alone!"

Lady Winifred lowered her eyes, and her irritation passed rapidly away.

She had somewhat changed since that stormy night on which we first introduced her to the reader, and had altered, as people do with increasing years, so as to be at times—shall we say it?—almost selfish in much that related to her own immediate hearth and household, and more especially in all that concerned the still more selfish Cosmo, on whom she doted, and in whom she could see no imperfection. Yet she could not but reproach herself bitterly when thinking of Quentin Kennedy, and the harsh, cutting words he had overheard.

Then as his smiling, loving, and handsome face came vividly in memory before her, she would ask of herself, "Is it thus, Winifred Rohallion, you have treated the strange orphan, the helpless child once, the mere lad now, who was cast by fate, misfortune, and the waves of that bleak November sea, years ago, at your door and at your mercy? Was it generous to cast forth upon the cold world the friendless, poor, and penniless youth, who loves you—ay, even as your own son *never* loved you? And what answer is to be given if, at some future day, his mother, who may be living yet, should come hither and demand him of you—you who stung and galled his proud spirit by

taunts, upbraiding and unmerited reproach?" And so she would whisper and think what she dared not say aloud; though "perhaps the lowest of our whispers may reach eternity, for it is not very far from any of us, after all."

By the past memories of her early life—by those of *one* whose face came at times unbidden before her, and by the pleasant days of *their* youth in pastoral Nithsdale—by those evenings when the sunset glowed so redly on the green summits of Mouswald and Criffel, while the Nith brawled joyously over its pebbled bed, and the white hawthorn cast its fragrance and its blossoms on the soft west wind—by all these, it might be asked, had she no compassion for the young love she was seeking to mar and crush?

She had alike compunction and compassion; but in this instance she deemed it the mere love of a boy for a girl, and not quite such as Rohallion's brother, Ranulph Crawford, had for her some seven-and-thirty years before.

Seven-and-thirty! a long vista they were to look back through now; but the events of her youth seemed clearer at times than those of her middle age, and as we grow older they always are so in dreams.

Quentin would soon forget the affair, she was assured, and self-interest and love for her own son blinded her to the rest—to all but a sorrow for the lost youth, and a craving to know his fate, where he was now, and with whom.

Thus many a night after his disappearance her heart upbraided her keenly; and many a lonely hour, unseen by others, she wept and prayed—prayed for the welfare and safety of the unknown lad she might never see or hear of more, for as a mother she had been to him, and he had been ever tender, loving, and kind as a son to her—much more than ever the Master had been in the days of his infancy and boyhood, for he was always cold, cruel, and headstrong; and now Quentin's place was vacant among them, as completely as if he was in the grave.

And Flora Warrender, though mentioned last, her sorrow was not the least. How lonely and how tiresome the old castle seemed to her now! All their favourite walks—the long, shady avenue by the foaming Lollard's Linn; the grand old garden with its aged yew hedges; the kelpies' haunted pool, where first she learned that he loved her, and felt his kiss upon her cheek; the ivied ruins of Kilhenzie, and every old trysting-place, seemed deserted now indeed.

She had no companion now in her rambles to touch up her sketches, to compare notes with in reading, to hover lovingly by her side at the piano, and so forth: thus Flora's "occupation" seemed, like the warlike Moor's, to be gone indeed!

The sunny August mornings came, but there came not with them Quentin, to meet her fresh and ruddy from a gallop along the shore, with a dewy bouquet from the garden, or with a basket of speckled trout from the river.

Slowly passed each lingering day, and evening followed; but there was no one to ramble with now by starlight in the terraced garden—to linger with by the sounding sea that surged upon the shore below and foamed upon the distant rock, or to share all her thoughts, and anticipate every wish.

She hoped he would return when his money was spent and when his passion cooled, or his love for her obtained the mastery. So did Lady Rohallion and the old lord—that honest, worthy country gentleman and gallant peer—never doubted it; but the quicker-seeing quartermaster did; so day followed day until they began to count the weeks, and still there came no news of the lost Quentin Kennedy.

CHAPTER XIX.

AN OLD SOLDIER'S STORY.

"If he was of Leven's," said the lieutenant.

"I told him your honour was."

"Then," said he, "I served three campaigns with him in Flanders."
Tristram Shandy.

A LAST glance at his old friends before we go in pursuit of Quentin.

"I fear me," said the quartermaster, shaking his old yellow wig, which still survived, and letting a long stream of tobacco smoke escape from his mouth, as he and the dominie lingered over their toddy-jugs one evening in "the snuggerie," I fear me much that the Master's London debts and liabilities are more than his father, worthy man, reckons on, and that Rohallion, wood and haugh, hill and glen, main and farm-town, will all be made ducks and drakes of within a week after the old lord is carried through the haunted gate and up the kirk loan yonder."

"Wae is me that I should hear this," said the dominie sadly.

"I speak in confidence, dominie," said the quartermaster, laying his "yard of clay" lightly on the other's arm, and lowering his voice.

"Of course—of course. But how different hath the Master's life been from his father's! Wasting his patrimony among London bucks and bullies—among parasites and flatterers, even

as Timon of Athens wasted his substance, till he was driven to seek sustenance by digging for the poorest roots of the earth."

"Our old lord has ever acted wisely, dominie; when not on active service, he has ever been resident on his ain auld patrimonial property—wisely so, I say, for it beseems not that the great names of the land should die out of the memory of those who inhabit it; d—n all absentees, say I!"

And as the quartermaster buried his red nose in the toddy-jug, the concluding anathema became an indistinct mumble.

"Bankruptcy and disgrace are before the Master, I fear," he resumed with a sigh, as he snuffed the long candles, which were placed in square-footed holders of carved mahogany, mounted with silver rings on the stems; "war may save him for a time, but only if he leaves the Guards."

"War, say ye?"

"Yes—for if he owed sums that surpassed the national debt, his creditors could never touch him while under orders for foreign service."

"But at his home-coming?"

"Ah, there's the rub, dominie. A fine story it would be to have the Master of Roballion—he, the heir of a line that never was disgraced—ever stainless and true—arrested by a dog of a bailiff—arrested, perhaps, at the head of his regiment, it might be after fighting the battles of his country! Zounds, dominie, it would be enough to make all the old oaks in Roballion wood drop their leaves and die, as if a curse had come upon the land! It would break his father's heart, and, much as I love the family, I would rather that Cosmo was killed in action, and that he had to endure such disgrace, or that after facing the French, as I know he will do bravely (for there never came a coward of the Crawford line), he had to flee ignobly to Holyrood, and become an abbey laird, that he might snap his fingers at the laws of both Scotland and England, until, perhaps, he got the lands of Ardgour."

The dominie was truly grieved to hear such things, for he had all the old Scottish patriarchal love of the family, under whom his forefathers—stout men-at-arms—in their time, had been trusted dependents, through long dark ages of war and tumult; so he drew a long sigh, took a deep draught from his toddy jug, and asked in a low voice—

"It aught were to happen unto the Master, how would the title go?"

"I scarcely ken, dominie; by the death of Ranulph Crawford in a foreign land, it would probably fall to some far-awa cousin, after the lands had been frittered among disputants in the Court

of Session, and the auld patent that King James signed on a kettle-drum head, had been hacked to rags by a Committee of Privileges. Confound the law, say I, wi' a' my heart! However, the old lord, Heaven bless him! is a hale man and strong yet, so let us not anticipate evils, which are sufficient for their own day."

"Four weeks—a whole month to-night, John, since we last saw Quentin," said the dominie, to change the subject.

"Poor Quentin!"

"As a bairn how bonnie he was—yea, beautiful as Absalom!"

The quartermaster sighed with impatience, it might be with a little air of disappointment, as he pushed his toddy-jug aside, and proceeded energetically to refill the bowl of his pipe. Why, thought he, has Quentin never written to me, according to his promise?

It was September now. The bearded grain that had been yellowing on the long corn-rigs of Rohallion was already gathered in; the harvest-kirn or home had been held in the great barn of the Home Farm, and the tawny stubbles gave the bared land a sterile aspect, till they disappeared as the plough turned up the shining furrows, where the black ravens flapped their wings, and the hoodie-crows sought for worms. The leaves were becoming brown and yellow as sienna tints spread over the copsewood, and the sound of the axe was heard at times, for now the husbandman looked forward to the closing year, and remembered the rhyming injunction:—

"Ere winter preventeth, while weather is good,
For galling of pasture get home with thy wood;
And carry out gravel to fill up a hole,
Both timber and furzen, the turf and the coal."

"Four weeks—ay, it is September now," said the quartermaster.

"And I fear me the lad will return no more."

"Say not so, dominie; he may come upon us when we least expect him."

"It may be, for, of a verity, life is full of strange coincidences."

"Strange, indeed! I have told you many a soldier's yarn, dominie; but did you ever hear of the strange meeting I had with an old man of the clan Donald?"

"Where—in the Highlands?"

"No, in America."

The dominie shook his head as a negative.

"Then fill your pipe, brew your toddy, draw your chair nearer the fire, and I'll tell you about it."

"You see, dominie, it was in the winter of '75, when Rohallion was lieutenant in the Light Company, and I but a corporal, that, with a detachment of ours, we joined Major Preston and Captain—afterwards the unfortunate Major—André in the stockaded fort of St. John, on the Richelieu River, in Lower Canada. In the fort were seven hundred rank and file, chiefly of the Cameronians and the 7th or Royal Fusiliers, and our orders were to defend the place to the last!

"We were soon attacked with great vigour by the American General Montgomery, at the head of Lord knows how many rebellious Yankees and yelling Indian devils; but like brave men we defended ourselves till the whole place was unroofed and riddled by shot and shell—defended ourselves, amid the snows of severe winter, on half-rations, and what was worse, on half-grog, till our ammunition was expended. Then, but not till *then*, we were compelled to surrender, and give up our arms, baggage, and everything to the foe.

"Disheartened by defeat, and denuded of everything but our regimentals, we were marched up the lakes by Ticonderoga. As I had no desire for remaining a prisoner during a war, the end of which none could foresee, and not being an officer, having no parole to break, I resolved to escape on the first available opportunity, and did so very simply, on the night-march along the borders of Lake George. There was a halt, during which I contrived to creep unseen into a thick furzy bush, and there I remained, scarcely daring to breathe, till the prisoners fell into their ranks an hour before daybreak, and surrounded by their escort of triumphant Yankees and Indians in their war-paint, proceeded on their sad and heartless journey into the interior.

"After the poor fellows had departed and all was still, while the ashes of the watch-fires smouldered and reddened in every breath of wind that passed over the snowy waste—and keen and biting blasts they were, I can tell ye, dominie—I slipped out of my friendly bush, stealthily as a snake might have done, and crawled away on my hands and knees from the vicinity of the deserted halting-place, for I dreaded to encounter some straggler of the escort, and still more did I dread some rambling Indian, who would have swooped down upon me with his scalping-knife, and I had not the slightest ambition to see my natural wig added to the other grizzly trophies on a warrior's hunting-shirt.

"Arms I had none, and was scarcely clothed. I was hungry, weary, and, on finding myself alone, I began to reflect whether I had acted wisely in escaping to face individually the perils that awaited me, for my tattered red coat marked me as an enemy, and in the stern frost of an American winter, you may believe, it

was not to be discarded or cast aside without a substitute. Such a garb increased my perils, and we all know what it cost poor Major André, of the Cameronians, when caught in his uniform within the American lines.

"The cold seemed to freeze my faculties, and vaguely endeavouring to retrace the way we had come, I hoped by some chance, and by the care of Providence, to reach the junction of the Sorrel or the Richelieu with the St. Lawrence, for there I knew that Colonel Maclean was posted with the royal regiment of Scottish Emigrants, but concerning how far I was from thence, and how I was to reach it, I knew no more than of what the man in the moon may be about at this moment.

"Vainly I toiled on till day dawned fully on the vast extent of snow-covered country. Then I found myself among the high and wooded hills that look down upon the bosom of the Hudson. Far in the distance lay Fort St. John which we had so long defended, and which had the Stars and Stripes where the Union Jack waved before. On the other hand, Lake George, a sheet of snow-covered ice, with all its isles, lay like a map at my feet, far down below.

"Cold, cold, ice, frost, snow, a biting wind everywhere! I sighed and shuddered with misery, and longed for any other garment than my fatal red coat, that I might approach a house or homestead, and crave a morsel of food, and permission, for a minute, to warm myself by the kitchen fire; but to make the attempt was too rash, and, though my prospects were not cheering, I had no desire to court a rifle-shot from some loophole or upper window.

"As I stumbled on by the skirts of a fir copse, which somewhat sheltered me from the biting north wind, and while the drowsy numbness of exhaustion was stealing over me, I heard a loud and sonorous voice commanding me to 'stop.' I turned and saw a man approaching me.

"His form was powerful and athletic, apparently, rather than tall, and he seemed about fifty years of age or more; very brown and weather-beaten in visage, and his hair was white as the snow around us. He had on a thick fur cap, the warm earlaps of which were tied under his chin; and over a yellow Indian hunting-shirt he wore a seaman's pea-jacket, with two rows of large white horn buttons in front. It was girt by a belt of untanned leather, in which were stuck a hunting-knife, a pair of brass-mounted pistols, and a rusty basket-hilted Highland broadsword. He was evidently one of the insurgents—'Mr. Washington's rebels,' as we named them. He carried a long rifle, and wore a pair of large deer-skin boots, that came well over his

sturdy thighs, and were strapped to his waist-belt. His whole appearance and bearing indicated a state of bodily strength, hardihood, confidence, and warmth, all of which, at that particular moment, I greatly envied. With his right hand on the hammer and his left on the barrel of his rifle, as if about to cock it, he said, in a voice that was both sharp and deep in tone—

“Stand, Englishman, if you would not be shot down, as many a time I have seen your countrymen shoot others, in cold blood.”

“I don’t think even death could make my blood colder than this,” said I, with chattering teeth; “but you accuse us unjustly of outrage.”

“Do I?” said he, with a fierce sneer; “by your doings at Lexington, I don’t think the Redcoats are much changed since I saw them in Lochaber.”

“I am not an Englishman,” said I, glancing at the sword in his girdle.

“Then, what the devil *are* you?” he asked sharply.

“I am a Scotsman, as I rather think you are,” I added, for he had a Skye-terrier look about that face that indicated a West Highlander.

“Indeed,” said he, in an altered tone, placing the butt of his rifle on the ground, greatly to my satisfaction and general ease of mind; “you are one of the force that defended Fort St. John, under Major Preston and Captain André?”

“Yes.”

“And how, then, are you here?”

“I was a prisoner, but escaped; and so great is my misery, that I beg of you to make me a prisoner again, if you are in the American interest.”

“By your yellow facings, you are not one of the King’s Fusiliers.”

“I am a 25th man,” said I.

“A 25th man?” he repeated, coming nearer, and looking hastily about to see if we were observed, but all around the vast landscape seemed desolate and tenantless; “I will screen and save you if I can, for the sake of the old country neither of us may ever see again; but, more than all, for the sake of the number on your buttons. Here, taste this first, and then follow me.”

“He drew a leather hunting-bottle from the pocket of his rough pea-jacket, and gave me a good dram of Jamaica rum, but for which, I am sure, I should have died there, for the cold was fast overpowering me.

“So you are a 25th man?” said he, surveying me with con-

siderable interest; 'well, for that reason, if it were for nothing else, I shall befriend you. Come this way.'

"I was too cold—too intensely miserable—to question his meaning, but accompanied him through the wood, by a narrow path where the snow lay deep, and where, in some places, it had fallen in such a manner over the broad, horizontal and interlaced branches of the pine trees as to form quite a covered passage, where the atmosphere felt mild—even warm, compared with the temperature elsewhere. After a time, we reached an open plateau, on the slope of the hills that look towards Lake George, where we found his hut, a comfortable and warm little dwelling, sheltered by stupendous pines, and built entirely of fir logs, dressed and squared by the hatchet, and pegged each down into the other, through holes bored by an augur. It had a stone chimney, within which a smouldering fire soon shot up into a ruddy blaze as he cast a heap of crackling fir cones on it, and then added some dry birch billets, that roared and sputtered cheerily, and threw showers of sparks all over us.

"He gave me some food, broiled venison, hard biscuits, and a good can of Jamaica grog; and he also gave me that which I needed sorely—warm clothing, in the shape of an old frieze coat, lined with martin skins, in lieu of my poor, faded and tattered regimentals, which, for security's sake, we cast into the fire and burned.

"Three days I remained with the trapper or hunter, for such he seemed to be, and on the fourth, after having carefully reconnoitred all the neighbourhood, he announced his intention of conducting me to Colonel Maclean's outposts upon the Richelieu; and being now thoroughly refreshed, I was glad to hear the tidings.

"'I shall never forget your kindness to me,' said I; 'and I value it all the more because you are one of those who are in arms against the king.'

"'It is maybe not the first time I have been so,' said he, with a deep snile puckering all his eyelids.

"'And you saved my life simply because I was a 25th man?'

"'Yes—because one of your regiment—it was Lord Leven's—no, Lord Semple's then—saved *mine*, at a harder pinch, some thirty years ago,' said he, gravely, as he marched on before me through the snow, with his long rifle sloped on his shoulder.

"'You have been a soldier, then?'

"'Like yourself, Lowlander, for I know you are southland bred by your tongue.'

"'In what regiment?' I asked.

"'In the clan regiment of Macdonald of Keppoch. Rest him,

God!' he exclaimed, taking off his cap and looking upward, while his keen grey eyes glistened, it might be in the frosty wind, under his bushy eyebrows.

"When was this—and where?"

"Can you be so dull as not to guess? It was in the ever-memorable and ever-glorious campaign under his Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, whom Heaven long preserve! It was in 1746, just thirty years ago. Look at these scars," he added, showing me several sword wounds that were visible among his thick white hair. 'I got these at Culloden, from Bland's dragoons, when fighting for Scotland and King James VIII.'

"You must be an old man?" said I.

"Old," he exclaimed; 'I am barely fifty—young enough to fight and ripe enough to die for my new home, this land of America, to which I was banished as a slave with many more of my clan and kindred.' He was now warming with his subject and the recollections of the past. 'There is,' he resumed a pass in the hills here that reminds me of my native glen in Croy. Often I go there and sit on the 16th of April, as the fatal day comes round, when outnumbered, three to one, by British and Hanoverians, the Highland swordsmen went down like grass on Culloden moor, before the withering fire of grape and musketry! Then the river that flows into Lake George seems the Nairn—the water of Alders; yonder open moorland seems the plain of Drummoisie, and the distant farm among the pine-trees passes for Culloden House. Afar off in the distance the bastions of Ticonderoga become those of Fort George, that jut into the Moray Firth, and yonder wooded mountain, as yet without a name, seems to me like wild Dun-daviot; and then as with the eyes of a seer, it all comes before me again, that April day, with its terrible memories! Then,' he continued, with flashing eyes, as he pointed across the plain, 'then I seem to see the white battle-smoke rolling over the purple heather, and the far-extended lines of the hell-doomed Cumberland reaching from Bland's scarlet horse on the right to the false Lord Ancrum's blue dragoons upon the left—these long and steady lines of infantry, Barrel's, Munro's, the Fusiliers, the Royals, and all the rest, in grim array, three ranks deep, the colours waving in the centre, the bayonets glittering in the sun. On the other,' his voice failed him, and almost with a sob, he continued, 'on the *other* hand, I see the handsome Prince, the idol of all our hearts, on his white horse, half shimmering through the smoke and morning mist, and then the loyal clans in all their tartans, with target and claymore: Murray on the right, and Perth on the left, in the centre Athol, Lochiel, Appin, Cluny, and Lovat, Keppoch, Glengarry, and

others, with wild Lord Lewis and old Glenbucket in the rear. Then once again from yonder pine forest I seem to hear the war-pipes playing the onset, and a thrill passes over me. I feel my sword in my hand—he dashed down his rifle and drew his claymore—‘I draw down my bonnet; I hear the wild cheer, the battle-cry of *Rìgh Hamish gu bragh!* pass along the line, as with heads stooped and targets up, we burst like a thunderbolt through the first line of charged bayonets! In a moment it is dispersed and overborne—it is all dirk and claymore, cutting, hewing and stabbing. On yet, on—and whoop! we break through the second line; on yet, through the *third*, and the day may be our own! Its fire is deadly and concentrated; I am beside the aged and white-haired Keppoch, my chief—all our people have fallen back in dismay before the fire of musketry and the treachery of the Campbells, who turned our flank. Keppoch waves his bonnet; again I hear him cry, My God! my God! have the children of my tribe forsaken me? Again the bullets seem to pierce me, and we fall to the earth together—and so the wild vision passes away!’

“While pouring forth all this, the Highland exile seemed like one possessed, and in his powerful imagination, I have no doubt that while speaking, the present snow-clad landscape passed away, and in fancy he saw the moor and battle of Culloden all spreading like a bloody panorama before him. Until he sheathed his sword I was not without uneasiness lest he might fill up the measure of his wrath by cutting and carving on me.

“‘At last it was all over,’ he resumed quietly and sadly; ‘and then came the butchery of the wounded by platoon firing and the desecration of the dead. Sorely wounded and faint with loss of blood, I found myself on the skirt of the field near the wall which the Campbells had broken down to enable the light dragoons to turn our right flank.

“‘Weary with the battle of the past day, a soldier was leaning against the wall, screwing a fresh flint into the lock of his musket. On seeing me move, he mercifully gave me a mouthful of water from his wooden canteen, and bound up my head with a shred torn from my plaid. I then begged him to help me a little way out of the field, as I was the sole support of an aged mother, and must live if possible. The good fellow said it was as much as his life was worth, were it known that he had spared mine; but as he, too, had an old mother in the lowlands far away, for her sake he would run the risk of assisting me.

“‘The morning was yet dark and we were unseen. He half carried, half dragged me for more than a mile, till we reached a thicket where I was in safety from the parties who were butcher-

ing the wounded. Some of these burned my mother's hut and bayoneted her on the threshold.

"I offered the soldier the tassels of my sporran or the silver buttons of my waistcoat as a reward, but he proudly refused them. I then pressed upon him my snuff-mull, on the lid of which my initials were engraved——"

"And he took it?" said I eagerly.

"He did, but with reluctance; and then I asked his name, that I might remember it in my gratitude——"

"And he told you that he was John Girvan of Semple's Foot—the 25th," said I.

"Yes—yes; but how know *you* that?"

"Because that friendly soldier was *my father*. He served against the Prince at Culloden (*four* Scotch regiments did so that day), and often have I heard him tell the story of how the mull came into his possession, and of the brave Highlanders who adhered to old Keppoch when all the clans fell back before the mingled shock of horse and foot in front and flank!"

"Your father!—that brave man your father? I thank God who has thus enabled me to repay to you the good deed done to me on that dark morning on Culloden Moor," said the Highlander with deep emotion, as he shook my hand with great warmth.

"Here is the mull," said I, producing it, "and you are welcome to a pinch from it again."

"It is indeed like an old friend's face," said he, looking with interest at his initials, D. M'D., graven on the silver top. "I made and mounted it in my mother's hut in Croy. Woe is me! How many changes have I seen since that day thirty years ago, when last I held it in my hand? And your father, soldier—I hope that brave and good man yet lives?"

"Alas! no," said I sadly; "he entered the Royals fifteen years after Culloden, and volunteered as a sergeant, with the forlorn hope, at the storming of the Moro Castle. He fell in the breach, and the mull was found in his havresack by the men who buried him there."

"The Highlander took off his cap and muttered a prayer, crossing himself the while very devoutly.

"But for him," said he, "instead of being a lonely trapper here by the shore of Lake George, the heather bells of thirty summers had bloomed and withered over my grave on the fatal moor of Culloden; but God's blessed will be done."

"After this unexpected meeting with one of whom I so often heard my worthy father speak when I was but a bairn, we became quite as old friends, and parted with regret when we reached the outposts of the Royal Scottish Emigrants, close to which he

guided me, and then took his departure to join General Montgomery, who deemed Donald Macdonald the chief of his marksmen.

"I never heard of him more; and as for the snuff-mull, I was robbed of it by some Germans, who cut the knapsack off my back as I lay wounded in the skirmish at Stoney Point, in the State of New York, in 1776; but this chance meeting with its original proprietor, shows us, dominie, what unexpected things may come to pass in the world. Life, as I said is full of strange coincidences, and we may meet with Quentin Kennedy or hear sure tidings of him, when least expected."

"I pray Heaven it may be so," sighed the dominie, over his empty toddy-jug, as he tied an ample yellow bandanna over his old three-cornered hat, and under his chin; and then assuming his cane prepared to depart.

"Jack Andrews has brought your pony round to the private door: take care o' the Lollard's Linn, for the night is dark; and now for the *deoch*—the stirrup-cup."

"Whilk the Romans ever drank in honour of Mercury, as I do now—that he may bestow a sound night's sleep," said the dominie, smacking his lips as the dram went down.

CHAPTER XX.

THE WAYFARER.

"On, on! through the wind and rain,
With the blinding tears and burning vein!
When the toil is o'er and the pain is past,
What reck's it *all* if we sleep at last."

All the Year Round.

WHEN we last saw him, we said that Quentin was going forth into the world to seek his fortune, though, perhaps, his chief idea or emotion was to get as far away as possible from the vicinity of Rohallion, its haughty lady, and the cold and crafty Master. As he passed through the ivied archway, he dashed aside the tears that his farewell with the old quartermaster had summoned.

"How often," thought he, "have I read in novels and romances, in dramas and story-books, of their heroes doing *this*—setting out on the vague and hopeful errand that was to lead to fame and fortune; but how little I ever expected to experience the stern reality, or believe that it would be my own fate! And now the hour has come—oh, it seems so strange now-a-days!"

Passing down the avenue, the stately trees of which were tossing their branches wildly in the gathering blast, he issued upon the highway, and proceeding along it without caring, and perhaps without considering, whether he went to the right or to the left.

Intense was the loneliness, and bitter the irritation of mind in which he pursued his aimless way, by the old and narrow road, which was bordered by ancient hedgerows where brambles and Guelder-roses were growing wild and untrimmed, and where the wind was howling now among the old beech-trees, as an occasional drop of rather warm rain that fell on his face, or plashed in the dust under foot, gave warning for a rough and comfortless night for a belated wayfarer.

Again and again he looked back to the picturesque, turreted, and varied outline of Rohallion, and saw its manylighted windows, *one* which he knew well, in the crowstepped gable of the western wing. It was the sleeping-place of Flora Warrender.

She would be there now—her head resting on her pillow, perhaps, sleepless and weeping for him, no doubt, and for the probable results of a quarrel, the end of which she could not foresee—weeping for the young heart that loved her so truly, so he flattered himself; and in the morning she would find that his room was tenantless, his bed unslept in, and that he was gone—*gone* no one knew whither!

Hope had scarcely yet risen in Quentin's breast; he felt but the stern and crushing knowledge that he was leaving his only home where all had loved, and where he truly loved all save *one*, to launch out upon an unknown world, and to begin a career that was as friendless as it was shadowy.

He had no defined plan, where to proceed, or what to essay. He naturally thought of the army; but, as he had ever anticipated a commission, he shrunk from enlisting, and thereby depriving himself of all liberty of action, and perhaps of forfeiting for ever the place which he felt himself, by birth and education, entitled to take in society.

Of business or the mood of attaining a profession, he was as ignorant as of the contents of the Koran, the Talmud, the Shasters, or the books of Brahma: and had he dropped from the moon, or sprung out of the turf, he could not have felt more lonely, friendless, and isolated in the world.

He was now passing the old ruined church, with its low and crumbling boundary-wall that encloses the graveyard, where, long ago, his drowned father had been reverently laid by the Rohallion Volunteers and the worthy old quartermaster.

How well Quentin knew the spot amid the solemn obscurity! he could see it from the time-worn foot-stile where he lingered

for a moment. *He* was lying beside the ancient east window, near the Rohallion aisle, where dead Crawfords of ages past, even those who had fallen in their armour at Flodden and Pinkey, Sark and Arkinholme, were buried. No stone marked the spot; but now the rough-bearded thistle, the long green nettle, the broad-leaved dock, and the sweetbriar, mingled mournfully over the humble last home of the poor dead wanderer.

Quentin felt his heart very full at that moment.

Did the father *see* his son to-night? Was he looking upon him from some mysterious bourne among the stars? Did he know the tumult, the sorrow, and the half-despair that were mingling in his breast?

Quentin almost asked these questions aloud, as, with a mind deeply agitated by conflicting thoughts, the poor fellow journeyed on.

A strong regard for the home he had left (of any *other* he had no memory now save a vague and indistinct dream), with painful doubts lest he had been ungracious, ungrateful, or unkind to any there, beset him, after the soft revulsion of feeling excited by the solemn aspect of the midnight churchyard.

Then came dim foreshadowings, the anxious hopes—a boy's certainty of future fame and distinction; but how, where, and in what path?

His romance-reading with Flora and the yarns of the quartermaster had filled his mind with much false enthusiasm and many odd fancies. He had misty recollections of heroes expelled or deserting from home under circumstances pretty similar to his own, who had flung themselves over awful precipices, when their bones were picked white (a doubly unpleasant idea) by the Alpine eagles or bears of the Black Forest: or who had thrown themselves upon their swords, or drowned themselves (the Lollard's Linn was pouring not far off; but the night was decidedly *cold*), yet none of these modes of exit, suited his purpose so well as walking manfully on, and imagining, with a species of grim satisfaction, the surmises and so forth at Rohallion, when the supper-bell rang and he did not appear; when Jack Andrews, with military punctuality, closed the old feudal fortress for the night, and still he was not to be found; and then the next day, with its increased excitement, was a thought that quite cheered him!

But there was Flora—sweet Flora Warrender, with all her winning little ways; and her image came upbraidingly before him despite the smarting of the wound given him by the Master, and the deeper sting of Lady Rohallion's words.

As glittering fancies rose like soap-bubbles in the sunshine;

as the *Châteaux en Espagne* rose too, and faded away into mud-hovels and even prisons, love and affection drew his thoughts back, and seemed to centre his hopes in and about Rohallion. Flora's face, the memory of past years of love and kindness experienced from Lady Winifred, and from the old lord, melted his heart, or filled it with regard and gratitude towards them, and he felt that, go where he might, Rohallion could never be forgotten. A verse of Burns that occurred to him, seemed but to embody his own ideas and emotions—

“The monarch may forget his crown,
That on his head an hour hath been;
The bridegroom may forget the bride,
Was made his wedded wife yestreen;
The mother may forget her child,
That smiles so sweetly on her knee;
But I'll remember thee, Glencairn,
And all that thou hast done for me.”

From an eminence above the oakwood shaw, he turned to take his last view of the old dwelling place; but he could only see its lights twinkling like distant stars, for the night was obscure and murky; the clouds were rolling in great masses; the wind came in fierce and fitful gusts from the Firth of Clyde, while the rain began to descend steadily.

Bodily discomfort soon recalled all his emotions of hate and anger at the Master, and with eyes that flashed in the dark, he turned his back, almost resentfully, on the old castle, and resumed his aimless journey.

“There is sometimes,” says a writer, “a stronger sense of unhappiness attached to what is called being hardly used by the world, than by a direct and palpable misfortune, for though the sufferer may not be able even in his own heart to set out with clearness one single count in the indictment, yet a *general* sense of hard treatment, unfairness, and so forth, brings with it a great depression and feeling of desolation.”

“Why was I orphaned in youth?” thought Quentin, bitterly, as this sense of unfairness and depression came over him; “why was I cast on the bounty, the mercy, of strangers? Why did I love Flora—why do we love each other so vainly, and why are we to be hopelessly separated?”

All these questions remained unanswered; but the blinding rain was now coming down in sheets, and he felt the necessity of seeking shelter without delay.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE VAULT OF KILHENZIE.

"Through gloomy paths unknown,
Paths which untrodden be,
From rock to rock I go
Along the dashing sea.
And seek from busy woe,
With hurrying steps to flee;
But know, fair lady! know,
All this I bear for thee!"

Ancient Poetry of Spain.

ON passing the long thicket or copse, known as the oakwood shaw, a number of fires burning on the heath beyond, and sheltered by the oaks from the west wind, at once indicated to Quentin that a gipsy camp was there. Indeed, he could see their figures flitting darkly to and fro around the red fires, on which they were heaping wood that smoked and sputtered in the wind and rain. He could also see the little tents or wigwams which were simply formed by half circular hoops stuck in the earth, and covered by canvas or tarpaulin.

Their miserable ponies were picquetted on the open heath, where, with drooping ears and comfortless aspect, they cropped the scanty herbage or chewed the whin bushes. Aware that these people were to be sedulously avoided, and that he must neither risk the loss of his portmanteau, or the money so generously lent him by the quartermaster, he clutched his walking-cane, turned hastily aside, and passing up a lane between hedge-rows, proceeded towards a farm-house, the occupants of which he feared might know him; but he was resolved to risk recognition, for the weather was becoming pitiless, and he had no alternative.

A watchdog barked furiously and madly, straining on his chain and standing on his hind legs, open-mouthed, as Quentin approached the house, which was involved in darkness and silence.

The rain was dashing on the closed windows, washing the bleak walls and gorging the spouts and gutters, as he handled vigorously and impatiently a large brass knocker, with which the front door was furnished. After the third or fourth summons, a window was opened in the upper story, and by the light within the room Quentin could perceive the face and figure of the irate farmer, Gibbie Crossgrane, in a white night-cap and armed with

a gun or musket, for Gibbie was one of the Roballion volunteers.

"Wha are ye, and what do you seek at this time o' night?" he demanded.

"Shelter——" Quentin began.

"Shelter!" shouted the other; "my certie! do you take this for a change-house, or an ale-wife's, that ye rap sae loud and lang?"

"I have lost my way, Mr. Crossgrane——"

"Then ye are the mair fule! But be off," he added, cocking his piece; "I warrant ye are nae better than ye should be. This is the third time I hae been roused out o' my warm bed this blessed night by yon cursed tingler bodies, that hae been fechtin and roost-robbing about Kilhenzie a' day, so be off, carle, I say, or aiblins I'll shoot ye like a hoodiecrow, ye vagrant limmer."

With these threatening words, which showed that he was determined to consider his visitor one of the gipsies, he slapped the butt of his gun significantly, and sharply closed the window ere poor Quentin could explain or reply.

"Churlish wretch!" he sighed, as he turned away, and revenged himself by hurling a huge stone at the yelling watch-dog, which, like a cowed bully, instantly plunged into his kennel, where he snapped and snarled in spite and anger.

Aware of the futility of making any further attempt in this quarter, Quentin returned to the high road, when, passing the ruins of Kilhenzie, he conceived the idea of taking shelter in one of the remaining vaults, wherein he knew that Farmer Crossgrane was wont to store straw and hay for his cattle.

Though the memory of John the Master's wraith, the spectre-hound of the holly thicket and other dark stories somewhat impressed him at this hour, and awed him as he approached the ruined walls, he hastened to avail himself of their shelter, quickening his pace to a run as he passed the giant tree of Kilhenzie, on the branches of which, the quartermaster and dominie averred, so many men had taken their leave of a setting sun.

He went straight to an arched vault which he knew well, as it opened off the grass-grown barbican, and finding it, as he expected, full of dry straw, he burrowed among it for warmth, and placing his portmanteau under his head, strove to avoid all thoughts of the gloomy ruin in which he had a shelter, and to sleep, if possible, till dawn of day.

The old stronghold was a familiar place, endeared to him by the memory of many an evening ramble with Flora Warrender, with whom he had explored every turret, nook, and corner of it;

and with the dominie, too, whose old legends of the fiery Kennedies of Kilhenzie—with whom he always loved to connect his pupil—were alike strange and stirring.

“Ah, if I should indeed prove to be the Laird of Kilbenzie—I who lurk here like a beggar to-night!” said Quentin, and then the quaint figure of his tutor the dominie, with his long ribbed galligaskins drawn over the knees of his corduroy breeches, came vividly before him.

He thought of the stately Lady Eglinton, who had always ridiculed this ideal descent, and of her daughters, but chiefly his old playmate, the gentle Lady Mary, and wondered whether they would mourn when they heard of what had befallen him. But Quentin was fated never to see the fair Montgomerys more; for Lady Mary died in her youth, and Lady Lilies died far away in Switzerland, where she was interred in the same grave with her husband.

It was now, after his recent rude repulse at the farmhouse, that he felt himself indeed a wanderer and an outcast!

Wet and weary, he shuddered with cold; the loss of blood he had suffered rendered him weak and drowsy, and but for the brandy so thoughtfully given him by old John Girvan, he could not have proceeded so far on his aimless journey.

He strove hard, with his nervous excitement, to sleep, and to find in oblivion a temporary release from thoughts of the happy days of past companionship and of love-making—days that would return no more—moments of delight and joy never to be lived over again! Flora's voice, as low and sweet as ever Annie Laurie's was; her clear and smiling eyes, her ringing laugh, so silvery and joyous, were all vividly haunting him, with the memory of that dear and—as it proved—*last* kiss in the ancient avenue.

All these were to be foregone now, it too probably seemed for ever, and Cosmo, with his thousand chances, had the field to himself, nor would he fail to use them.

Despite his strong and almost filial love for Lord and Lady Rohallion, Quentin felt in his heart that he hated the cold and haughty Master as the primary cause of all his misery, and the memory of the degrading blow, so ruthlessly dealt by his hand, burned like a plague-spot on his soul, if we may use such a simile.

Gradually, however, sleep stole upon him, but not repose, for he had strange shuddering fits, nervous startings, and perpetual dreams of vague and horrible things, which he could neither understand nor realize.

Once he sprang up with a half-stifled cry, having imagined

that the hand of a strange man had clutched his throat! So vivid was this idea, that some minutes elapsed before he fully recovered his self-possession.

"The wound on my head and the consequent loss of blood cause these unusual visions," thought he, not unnaturally. "Oh, that I could but sleep—sleep soundly, and forget everything for a little time!"

The rain and the wind had ceased now, and he heard only the cawing of the rooks in the echoing ruin. He could see the morning star shining with diamond-like brilliance, but coldly and palely, through a loophole of the vault, and with a sigh of impatience for the coming day he was composing himself once more to sleep, when suddenly his hand came in contact with the fingers of *another*, protruding from the straw near him—the straw on which he was lying!

His first emotion was terror at being there with some person unknown, without other weapon than a walking-cane.

His next thought was flight from this silent companion, whom he addressed twice without receiving other reply than the echo of his own voice reverberating in the vault.

It had been no dream; a hand must indeed have been on his throat—a hand that if he stirred or breathed might clutch him again; but *whose* hand?

Prepared to make a most desperate resistance, he listened, but heard only the beating of his heart, and the drip, drip, dripping moisture from the ivy leaves without, or the occasional rustle of the straw within the vault. Fearfully he put forth his hand to search again, for a streak of dim light was glimmering through a loophole, and again his hand came in contact with the other. Cold, rigid, motionless, it was, he knew, with a thrill of horror, the hand of a corpse!

With an irrepressible and shuddering cry, Quentin sprang up, and as did so he could now see, half-hidden amid the straw on which he had slept, and literally beneath him, the dead body of a man—the features white, pale, and pinched; the hands half upraised, as if he had died in the act of resistance or in agony. A bunch of wooden ladles, porridge spurtles, and horn spoons that lay near, all covered with blood, showed that he was a gipsy, who had been slain in one of the scuffles which were of frequent occurrence between adverse tribes of those lawless wanderers, and that he had been concealed in the vault of Kilhenzie, or had crawled there to die. Quentin conceived the former to be the most probable cause for the body being there.

All that the foregoing paragraph has embraced Quentin's eye and mind took in with the rapidity of a flash of lightning, and snatching his portmanteau, he sprang out of the vault, rushed

down the slope on which the old castle stands, and shivering with disgust, affright, and the cold air of the damp morning, found himself again on the highway that led to Maybole.

The birds were singing and twittering merrily in the green hedge-rows and among the dew-dripping trees, as the August day came in. Already the roads were almost dry, and as a blue-bonneted ploughboy passed with a pair of huge Clydesdale horses afield, whistling gaily, Quentin shrunk behind a hedge, for his clothes, damped by the rain over-night, were nowise improved in aspect by the bed he had selected; and now on examining them, he perceived to his dismay and repugnance that they exhibited several spots of blood, and his hands wore the same sanguine hue. Whether these ominous marks had come from his own veins or from those of the corpse near which he had so unpleasantly lain, Quentin knew not, but in great haste he sought a runnel that gurgled by the wayside, and there with the aid of a handkerchief he removed the stains with as much dispatch and care as if they had been veritable signs of guilt and shame.

We have said that blood gouts had been found in the gipsy bivouac, and Farmer Crossgrane had mentioned incidentally that the vagrants had been fighting. They were notorious for the free and reckless use of their knives and daggers, so doubtless, the body lying in Kilhenzie was the result of a recent affray. Quentin now discovered that he had lost his walking-cane, and that in his flight from the ruin he had left it in the vault beside the dead man. He regretted this, as the cane was a present from Lord Roballion, and had his initials graven on its silver head; but he could not overcome his repugnance sufficiently to face again his ghastly bedfellow, or to return, and so hastened from the vicinity of the old castle.

He had not, however, proceeded two miles or so, before the alarming idea occurred to him, that this cane, if found beside the dead man, might serve to implicate him in the affair; and through the medium of his active fancy he saw a long train of circumstantial evidence adduced against him, and in his ruin, disgrace, it might be death, a triumph given to Cosmo Crawford which even *he* could not exult in.

These terrible reflections gave the additional impulse of fear to urge him on.

The morning was sunny, breezy, and lovely; the sky a pure blue, and without a cloud; the light white mists were rising from the shady glens and haughs where the wimpling burns ran through the leafy copse or under the long yellow broom, when from an eminence Quentin took his last farewell of scenery that was endeared to him by all his recollections of childhood and youth, and heavy, heavy grew his heart as he did so. He could

see the glorious Firth of Clyde opening in the distance, and all the bold and beautiful shore of Carrick stretching from the high Black Vault of Dunure away towards the bluff and castle of Roballion.

Dunduff and Carrick's *brown* hill had mist yet resting on their summits, and afar off, paling away to greyish blue, was Ailsa Craig, rising like a cloud from the water—the white canvas of many a ship, homeward-bound or outward-bound, merchantman, privateer and letter-of-marque, like sea birds floating on the bosom of the widening river. On the other side he saw the rich undulations that look down on the vast and fertile plains of Kyle and Cunninghame, and in the middle distance Maybole, amid the golden morning haze, the quaint little capital of Carrick, with its baronial tower and Tolbooth spire.

There he considered himself as certain of being recognized by some of the vintners, ostlers, or by Pate, the town piper, for the place had been a favourite turning point with him and Flora Warrender, in their evening rides; and he also knew that if he were *not* recognised, the smallness of his portmanteau suggested that the estimate which might be formed of him by Boniface, by waiters and others, would not be very high.

He therefore resolved to avoid that ancient Burgh-of-Barony altogether, and the carrier for Ayr coming up at that moment, he struck a bargain with him for conveyance thither. Remembering how Roderick Random and other great men had travelled by this humble mode of locomotion, he gladly took his seat by the side of the driver, a lively and cheerful fellow, who knew all the cottars and girls on the road, and who whistled or sang incessantly varying marches, rants, and reels, with Burns' songs, every one of which he knew by heart—and he knew Burns too, having, as he boasted, “flitted the poet from Irvine to Mossiel in '84—just four-and-twenty years sinsyne.”

He blithely shared his humble breakfast of sour milk in a luggie, barleymeal bannock and Dunlop cheese, with our hero, whose spirits seemed to rise as the morning sun soared into the cloudless sky, and he seemed to feel now the necessity of ceasing to mope, of becoming the maker of his own fate, the arbiter of his own destiny, and he determined, if possible, to “wrestle with the dark angel of adversity till she brightened and blessed him.”

When left to himself, however, lulled by the monotonous rumble of the waggon wheels, he lay back among the carrier's bales, and gave himself up to day-dreams and his old trade of airy castle-building.

He had forty guineas in his pocket, he was sound wind and limb, and had all the world before him!

All tinted in rosy and golden colours, he saw the future scenes in which he was to figure—kings being at times but accessories and “supers” of the grouping. He held imaginary conversations with the great, the noble and the wealthy; he was the hero of a hundred achievements, but, whether on land, on sea, or in the air, he had not as yet the most remote idea; but they all tended to one point, for his fancies, ambitions, and hopes seemed, not unnaturally, to revolve in an orbit, of which Flora Warrender and Lady Rohallion—for he dearly loved her too—were the combined centre of attraction.

Full of himself and of the little world of fancy he was weaving, he cared not where he went or how the time passed, for he was just at that delightful and buoyant period of life when novels and tales of adventure fill the mind with sentiments and imageries that seem quite *realities*; thus, he felt assured that like some of the countless heroes, whose career he had studied at times in history but much oftener in fiction, he was destined for a very remarkable and brilliant future.

Travelling in the corner of a carrier's waggon, after sharing the proprietor's sour milk and home-baked bannocks, did not look very like it; but was not this simply *the beginning of the end*?

When again they met, how much would he have to tell Flora, commencing with the very first night of his departure, and that horrible adventure in the vault of Kilhenzie.

But how if she married the Master, with his sneering smile and cat-like eyes?

This fear chilled him certainly; but he felt trustful. Hope inspires fresh love as love inspires hope, for they must grow and flourish together; and so on and on he dreamed, until a sudden jolt of the waggon roughly roused him, and he found that it was just crossing “the auld brig o' Ayr,” the four strong and lofty arches of which first spanned the stream when Alexander II. was king.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE QUEEN ANNE'S HEAD.

“Well, suppose life be a desert? There are halting-places and shades, and refreshing waters; let us profit by them for to-day. We know that we must march on when to-morrow comes, and tramp on our destiny onward.”—*Thackeray*.

HAVING amply satisfied the worthy carrier, Quentin quitted the waggon, and proceeded through the bustling, but then narrow, unpaved, and ill-lighted streets of Ayr, towards one of the prin-

cipal inns, the Queen Anne's Head, the only one in the town with which he was familiar, as Lord Rohallion's carriage occasionally stopped there. It was a large, rambling, old-fashioned house, with a galleried court, ample stabling, low ceiled rooms; with dark oak panels, heavy dormant beams, and stone fire-places; wooden balconies projecting over stone piazzas, tall gables, and turret-like turnpike stairs; and a mouldered escutcheon over the entrance door showed that in palmier days it had been the town mansion of some steel-coated lesser baron.

Hotels were still unknown in the three bailiwicks of Carrick, Kyle, and Cunninghame; thus in the yard behind the Queen Anne's Head, the stage coach, his Majesty's mail (whose scarlet-coated guard bore pistols, and a blunderbuss that might have frightened Bonaparte), the carrier's waggon, the farmer's gig, and the lumbering, old-fashioned coaches of my Lord Rohallion, or the Earls of Cassilis and Eglinton, with their wooden springs and stately hammercloths, might all be seen standing side by side. Though war rendered the continent a sealed book to the English. Sir Walter Scott's poems and novels had not as yet opened up all Scotland to the tourists of Europe and Cockneydom. The kingdom of the Jameses could not be "done" then as now, by Brown, Jones, and Robinson, with knapsack on back (with Black's Guide and Bradshaw's Tables, tartan pegtops and paper collars), in a fortnight by rail and steam; hence a traveller on foot, and portmanteau in hand, was apt to be considered in the rural districts as an English pedlar or worse. Indeed, Scotland and England were then very little changed from what they had been in the days of William and Mary, and but for worthy old James Watt they might have been so *still*.

"I'll be extravagant—I'll have a jovial dinner and a glass of wine," thought Quentin, who, though pale and weary, had the appetite of a young hawk, notwithstanding all his doubts and troubles. "Which way?" he inquired of a surly-looking waiter, who stood at the inn door, with a towel over his arm; but this official, instead of replying, very leisurely surveyed Quentin from head to foot, and then glanced superciliously at his portmanteau.

His wetting over night, his repose among the straw, and the subsequent journey among the carrier's bales and butter firkins had not improved his external appearance. Quentin felt aware of this, and reiterated angrily,

"Which way—did you not hear me?"

"You've taen the wrang gate, my friend, I'm thinking," replied the waiter, shaking his head.

"Wrong way! What do you mean, fellow?"

"Nae mair a fellow than yoursel'," said the waiter, saucily.

"The 'Blue Bell,' doon the next wynd, or the 'Souter Johnnie,' opposite the 'Tolbooth, will better suit ye than the 'Anne's Head.' They are famous resorts for packmen and dustifute bodies."

"I mean to remain where I am. Show me to a bedroom, and order dinner for me in the dining-room," said Quentin, flushing up with sudden passion. "The best in the house, and lose no time!"

"Some military gentlemen are in the best chamber," urged the waiter, whom this manner did not fail to impress, as he lingered with his hand on the lock of a door.

"If the devil himself were there, what is it to me? Do as I order, or I will kick you into the street!"

The waiter, who, as tourists and idle travellers were then unknown in Ayr, was utterly at a loss to make out the character of this new guest, bowed and ushered him into a bedroom, after which, he hastened away, no doubt to report upon the dubious kind of occupant who had almost forced his way into No. 20.

Though the contents of Quentin's portmanteau were limited, he speedily made such an improvement in his toilet, that when he came forth he received a very gracious bow from Boniface, who had been hovering about the corridor on the watch; and he was ushered into the principal dining-room of the establishment, a long and rather low-roofed apartment, having several massive tables and oval-backed old-fashioned chairs, a gigantic sideboard, within the brass rail of which stood three upright knife and spoon cases, several plated tankards, salvers, and branch candlesticks of quaint and antique form.

The room was decorated with prints of Nelson's victories, the siege of Gibraltar, the battle of Alexandria, and other recent glories of our arms by sea and land; while over the mantelpiece was one of Gillray's gaudily-coloured political caricatures, which were then so much in vogue—for he was the H. B. and *Punch* of the Regency.

Two officers in undress uniform, with blue facings (their swords, sashes, and caps lying on the table beside them), were lounging over some brandy and water, and laughing at Gillray's not over-delicate print, while Quentin retired to a remote corner of the room, and smarting under the waiter's impertinence, now felt more lonely and depressed than he had done since leaving home. He could remember that his last reception in that very house had been so different, when, in Lady Rohallion's carriage, he and Flora Warrender had driven up to the door and ordered luncheon.

One of the military guests was a tall, weather-beaten, soldier-like man, about thirty-five years of age, a lieutenant apparently by the bullion of his epaulettes; the other was slender, fair-

haired, and rather plainly featured, and proved to be the ensign of his recruiting party, which was then beating up at Ayr. As the churlish waiter passed them after putting some wine before Quentin, the lieutenant asked, in a low voice—

"What is *he*?"

"Who, sir?"

"That young fellow in the corner."

"Too proud for a recruit—an officer, I think," said the waiter, with a grin.

"A sheriff's officer?—that boy, do you mean?"

"No, sir—in the army," whispered the waiter, with a still more impertinent grin, and retired before Quentin could hurl the decanter at his head, which he felt very much inclined to do.

He was seriously offended, but affected to look out of the window, while the two subalterns, turning their backs on him, resumed their conversation as if he had not been present.

"And so, Pimple," said the senior, "when you proposed for the Bailie's daughter you were deep in love—"

"Yes—very."

"And in debt and drink, too?"

"I was in love, I tell you," said the ensign, angrily.

"For the *twenty-fifth* time, eh?"

"Not exactly, Monkton; but you are aware that fathers have flinty hearts, and seldom see with—with—"

"With what—out with it, old fellow."

"Their charming daughters' eyes," sighed the ensign.

"True, or I should have been seen to advantage long ago. But an ensign under orders for foreign service is not the most eligible of sons-in-law."

"True—but in *my* case, at least," continued the ensign, who was quite serious, while his senior officer was purple with suppressed laughter, "in my case, as a young gentleman possessed of moderate fortune, moderate accomplishments——"

"And moderate virtue—eh, Pimple?"

"You are very impertinent, Monkton," remonstrated the other, upbraidingly.

"But truthful, my dear boy, very truthful," said the quizzing lieutenant, for half the conversation was mere "barrack-room chaff," to use a phrase then unknown; "and if old Squaretoes——"

"Who do you mean?"

"Mean? why this rich old flax-spinner, the father of your fair one. If he should come down handsomely, we fellows of the 25th would consider you quite as our factor—eh, Pimple?"

On hearing this number, which was so familiar to his ear, Quentin Kennedy turned to observe the speakers more particu-

larly, when a third officer, a very handsome man, about forty years of age, with a nut-brown cheek, a rollicking blue eye, and a hearty laugh, a square, well-built form, clad in full regimentals, scarlet-faced and lapelled with green and gold to the waist, and wearing large loose epaulettes, burst into the room, noisily and without ceremony. As he did so, he threw his arms round a very pretty chambermaid, who was tripping past with something from the sideboard, and kissing the girl, who was half pleased and half scared, he shouted in a tragi-comic manner, a passage from the *Merchant's Wife*, a now forgotten play:—

“Woman, thou stol'st my heart—just now thou stol'st it,
A cannon-bullet might have kissed my lips
And left me as much life!”

“If the sour-visaged landlord catches you kissing any of his squaws”—suggested the lieutenant.

“It is a custom we learned in the Dutch service,” replied the new comer, laughingly.

“Have you got the route for to-morrow, Warriston?” asked the lieutenant.

“All right,” said the other, flourishing an oblong official paper; “it was brought by an orderly dragoon—here it is. His majesty's will and pleasure, &c., to civil (query, uncivil) magistrates and others, and so forth, to provide billets for the noisy, carriages for the drunken, and handcuffs for the disorderly, of three officers, three sergeants, and seventy rank and file, proceeding by Muirkirk and Kirknewton to Edinburgh—a seventy miles' march.”

“Ugh!” groaned the lieutenant.

“So, Pimple, your love affair must be off like ourselves, by beat of drum to-morrow.”

The ensign heaved a kind of mock sigh, and raised his white eyebrows.

“Now, waiter, quick with the dinner—the best in larder and cellar,” said the captain to that churlish attendant, who laid a knife and fork for Quentin at the extreme end of the long table.

“Who is the solitary or exclusive person that is to be carved for there, half a mile off?” asked the captain.

The waiter glanced towards Quentin.

“Nonsense,” said the captain of the 94th, “lay his cover with ours—absurd to dine alone at the end of this devilish long table. You'll join us, eh?”

“With pleasure,” said Quentin, bowing.

“A glass of wine with you. What are you drinking?”

“Sherry.”

They filled their glasses, bowed, and drank, after which Quentin came forward and joined them.

"I'm Dick Warriston, 94th. My friends, Mr. Monkton and Mr. Boyle, 25th.

"Mr. Kennedy," said Quentin, introducing himself, with a heightened colour.

Quentin soon learned from their conversation that the captain had been recruiting for the 94th, and the other two officers for the 25th, in Ayrshire, with considerable success; that they had obtained a sufficient number of men, and were under orders to march for the head-quarters of their respective corps by daybreak on the morrow. He also heard, incidentally, some of the little secrets of recruiting, and the tricks played by knowing sergeants to trepan men into paying smart-money, and so forth; that the lieutenant had been "rowed" with a threat of being summoned to head-quarters for enlisting men beneath the proper height, his sergeants having supplied them with false heels, five feet seven being the minimum for "the Borderers;" and next, that he had narrowly escaped a court-martial for sending some half-dozen O'Neils and O'Donnells (all Irish) to the regiment, as MacNeils and MacDonnells from the Western Isles.

The three officers, in their jollity, thoughtlessness, laughter, and general lightness of heart, formed a strong contrast to poor Quentin's dejection of spirit. He envied them, and asked of himself why was he not happy and merry too—why was he not one of them?

Richard Warriston, the senior, had begun life as a subaltern in General Sir Ralph Dundas's regiment of the Scots-Dutch, as they were named—the famous old Scots brigade of six battalions, which served their High Mightinesses the States of Holland from the days of James VI. to those of the French Revolution—in all the bloody wars of two centuries, bearing themselves with honour and never losing a standard, though they had captured many from every army in Europe. They volunteered, as the 34th Foot, into the British service about the end of the last century, and came back to Scotland clad in the old Dutch yellow uniform; hence Warriston's stories and memories were all of Holland and Flanders, Prussia and Austria, and many a strange anecdote he had to tell at times.

Desirous of showing the suspicious landlord and impertinent waiter how *other* persons viewed him, Quentin ordered another bottle of wine.

"The deuce!" he heard the captain whisper to Monkton; "we can't permit this mere boy to treat us to wine."

"Two bottles, and be sharp, waiter," said Quentin, whose pride the well-meaning officer had piqued.

"He is a regular trump," said Monkton, adjusting his napkin.

A gentleman—a phrase I prefer, added Warriston in the same undertone, as he proceeded to slice down a gallant capon; for he could perceive at once, by Quentin's bearing at the dinner-table—the truest and best test—that he knew all its etiquette and had been used to good society. As the wine circulated and reserve thawed (not that there was much of it, certainly, in the present quartett), Quentin asked Monkton if he remembered an officer named Girvan in his corps.

“Girvan—Girvan—remember him?—yes; an old quartermaster—rose from the ranks, didn't he?”

“Yes.”

“He left us on a half-pay commission in the year I joined, during Lord Rohallion's lieutenant-colonelcy. (By-the-bye, his lordship lives somewhere hereabout; should leave our cards for him, but have no time.) Girvan was a queer old fellow, who always wore a yellow wig—do you know him?”

“Intimately. I have known him from my childhood,” said Quentin, his eyes sparkling and heart swelling with pleasure, that he could speak of some one at home.

“Any relation of yours?” asked Monkton; and so weak is human nature that Quentin blushed that any one should think he was so, and then blushed deeper still that he was ashamed of his true and sterling old friend.

“Perhaps he is your father?” suggested the ensign, mischievously.

“Sir, I said my name is Kennedy; my father was a captain of the Scots Brigade in the French service.”

“Ah—indeed!” said Warriston, becoming suddenly interested; “is he still alive?”

“Alas, sir, no!”

“Killed in action, likely?”

“He was drowned at sea, after an engagement with a French ship off the mouth of the Clyde.”

“And where have you come from, that you travel thus alone?”

“I cannot say.”

“Then where are you going to?” asked the ensign.

“I don't know,” replied Quentin, sadly.

“Can't say and don't know!” said the captain of the Scots Brigade; “then my advice would be to stay where you are.”

“That is not possible.”

“You are an odd fellow—quite an enigma,” said Monkton, laughing.

“Perhaps I am,” replied poor Quentin, with a sickly smile.

“Do you know, my young friend, that I have been observing you closely for some time (pardon me saying so), but with some-

thing of friendly interest, and I perceive an air of dejection about you that shows there is something wrong—a screw loose somewhere,” said Captain Warriston, kindly.

“Wrong?” repeated Quentin, flushing, and in doubt how to take the remark.

“Yes; I have seen so much of the world that I can read a man’s face like an open book.”

“And the reading of mine——”

“Is satisfactory; but there is something in your eyes that tells me you are in a scrape somehow—at home, perhaps?”

“Home!” exclaimed Quentin, in a voice that trembled, for the wine was affecting him; “I have *none*!”

The three officers glanced at each other, and the fair-haired ensign’s white eyebrows went up rather superciliously.

“I find that I must talk with you, my young friend,” said Warriston—“will you have a cigar?” he added, offering his case after the cloth was removed.

“Thank you—no; I am not a smoker.”

In fact, Quentin had never seen the soothing “weed” in such a form, until his foe, the Master, came to Rohallion.

“Waiter, bring candles—another bottle, and then be off these decanters are empty—fill again; *le Roi est mort—vive le Roi!*”

“In short, Mr. Kennedy, you have run from college or home, I fear,” said Monkton; “what have you been about—making love to some of your lady-mother’s maids, and got into a double scrape, or what? See how he flushes—there has been some love in the case, at least.”

“Were *you* never in love?” asked Quentin, who certainly did redden, but with annoyance.

“Who—I—me?—what the devil—in love!” and the bulky lieutenant lay back in his chair and fairly laughed himself crimson, either at the idea or the simplicity of the question. “I have long since learned that there is nothing so variable in the world as woman’s temper.”

“The Horse Guards excepted,” said Warriston; “the great nobles there never know their own minds for three days consecutively; witness all the vacillation about who is to command the Spanish expedition.”

“Then, Mr. Pimple,” began Quentin, “have you ever——”

“Mr. Kennedy,” said the ensign, angrily, “I’ll have you to know, sir, that my name is Boyle—Ensign Patrick Boyle, at your service.”

“So it is,” said the lieutenant, choking with laughter, on perceiving that Quentin looked quite bewildered; “but we call him

Pimple at the mess for being only five feet and an inch or so! He is not big enough to be a Boyle, though he is one of a tall Ayrshire stock. Is it not so, Pat, old boy? Perhaps you are some relation of the famous chemist?"

"Which—who?"

"I mean Robert Boyle was seventh *son* of the Earl of Cork, and became *father* of chemistry. Now, don't think of calling me out, Pat, for, 'pon my soul, I won't go. The 25th couldn't do without us. You must know, Warriston, that Pimple was in the Royals before he joined us; but he had always a fancy for the Borderers. You used to pass yourself, in mufti, as a 25th man; didn't you, Pimple?—long before you had the honour to admire that blessed number on your own buttons—eh?"

Though hearty, hospitable, and jovial, to Quentin it seemed that Monkton had an irrepressible desire to quiz the ensign, even to rudeness, and the latter took it all good-naturedly enough till the fumes of the wine mounted into his head.

"But, to return to what we were talking of," said Warriston, earnestly and kindly. "Can I advise you in any way, my friend? Are you already a prodigal, who has neither a herd of promising pigs, nor the husks wherewith to feed them?"

"Excuse me entering much into my own affairs. My father, I have told you, is dead. I have no mother—no friends—to counsel me," he continued, in a tremulous voice, "and I know not whether to join the service or drown myself in the nearest river."

"The Ayr is not very deep," said Monkton, despite a deprecatory glance from his senior; "why don't you say hang yourself?"

"Well, then, or hang myself," said Quentin, bitterly.

"And the alternative is joining the service?"

"Yes."

"You pay his Majesty and his uniform a high compliment," said Warriston, with a hearty laugh, in which Quentin, seeing the ungraciousness of his remark, was fain to join; "but as for entering the ranks, you must not think of that. Why not do as I did, and many better men have done—join some regiment of Cavalry or Infantry, as a gentleman volunteer?"

A new light seemed to break upon Quentin with these words—a new hope and spirit flashed up in his heart.

"How, sir," he asked, "how, sir? Explain to me, pray."

"Zounds, man! it is very simple. A letter of recommendation to the officer commanding any regiment now under orders for the seat of war, a few pounds in your pocket to pay your way till under canvas or before the enemy, are all that is necessary."

"Thanks to a dear friend, I have money enough and to spare ; but the letter——"

"We have too many volunteers already with both battalions of the Scots Brigade," said Warriston, reflectively.

"But you can give him a letter to our commanding officer," interposed Monkton.

"Why not give him one yourself, Dick?"

"Old Middleton would never believe in any person who was warmly recommended for the first vacant commission by such a fellow as I."

"Egad, you are perhaps right," said Warriston, laughing ; "get me ink and paper, Pimple——"

"Boyle," said the ensign, sullenly.

"Beg pardon, Boyle, I mean—thanks. Here goes for all the virtues that were ever recorded on a rich man's tombstone." With great readiness Captain Warriston wrote a letter of introduction and recommendation for Quentin to the officer commanding the 25th Foot, in which he gave him as many good qualities as the sheet of paper could contain, and wrote of him as warmly as if he had known him from boyhood. It was unanimously approved of by all present—by none more than Quentin himself, and after it was duly sealed, he pocketed it as carefully as ever Gil Blas did his patent of nobility.

CHAPTER XXIII.

NEW FRIENDS.

"Why unite to banish care?
Let him come our joys to share;
Doubly blest our cup shall flow
When it soothes a brother's woe;
'Twas for this the powers divine
Crowned our board with generous wine."—*Tannahill.*

"THE first skirmish, perhaps, and the first general action, certainly, will see you an officer ; you shall be one yet, my boy, and a gallant one, I hope," said Warriston, shaking Quentin's hand.

The weird sisters' prophecy was not more grateful to the ears of the Scottish usurper than these words were to Quentin Kennedy ; but he asked—

"If I should be disabled before appointment?"

"Ah, the devil ! don't think of that ; you would get only a private soldier's pension."

"That is not very encouraging."

"'Tis better for the volunteer to be shot outright than merely mutilated. But remember, that many of our best officers have joined the army as simple volunteers. There was Lord Heathfield, the gallant defender of Gibraltar, began life as a volunteer with the 23rd at Edinburgh; and one of our Highland regiments, the 71st, I think, had as many as fifteen such cadets serving in its ranks during the American war, and splendid officers they have all become. I did not serve in America, for our corps was then in the Dutch service. The Prussian army under old Frederick was the Paradise of such volunteers, and I know one instance in which a soldier of my father's regiment was made a general in one year, by Frederick's mere caprice."

"A general!" exclaimed Monkton, who was somewhat soured by the slowness of his promotion.

"It was at the battle before Prague, and while my father, John Warriston of that ilk, then a very young man, commanded the senior battalion of the Prussian Foot Guards, that Marshal Daun forced Frederick to raise the siege and retire. As the Prussians fell back, their left wing became confused by the fury of the Austrian advance. Frederick's aides-de-camp were all killed, and he was compelled to gallop about, giving his own orders, accompanied by a single orderly, Strutzki, the old Putkammer Hussar, in whose arms he died thirty years after. The ground was rough and his horse was weary, so it stumbled suddenly and threw him at a place where the field was covered by the killed and wounded of my father's battalion, which was then retreating, but in good order. As Frederick gathered himself up, a soldier who lay near him wounded, exclaimed,—

"'Sire, sire, get a brigade of guns into position on yonder eminence, or it is all up with your left wing!'

"'How so, fellow?' asked the king, whose temper was in no way improved by his tumble.

"'Because there is an ambuscade in the valley beyond it.'

"'I have twice tried to make a stand, comrade.'

"'Try a third time, Father Frederick.'

"'Why?'

"'A third chance is ever the lucky one.'

"'Good; I'll throw forward the Putkammer Hussars, and let the Brigade of Seydlitz support them.'

"'But try the effect of a few round shot in the defile,' persisted the wounded man. 'A devil of a day this for us, Father Frederick! Macchiavelli, in his 'Art of War,' declares the invention of gunpowder a mere matter of smoke, not to be deemed of the smallest importance. Ach Gott! I wish he was

here before Prague with this Austrian bullet in the calf of his leg.'

"'What, my friend, you are a reader as well as a soldier?'

"'Yes, sire, I have had the honour to read all the works of your Majesty.'

"'A man of sense!' said Frederick, taking a pinch of rappee; 'your name?'

"'Peter Schreutzer, of Colonel Warriston's battalion of the Guards.'

"'Frederick drew from one of his fingers a ring of small value, (he was not a man given to trinkets or adornment), and gave it to the soldier, saying:

"'If you escape this field of Prague, bring this ring to me yourself, comrade Peter.'

"Mounting his horse, he galloped after his retreating army, and overtaking a few pieces of artillery, he posted them on the height indicated by Schreutzer, and opened fire on the wooded defile—a measure which dislodged a great ambuscade of Marshal Daun's infantry, and saved from destruction the Prussian left wing, the retreat of which was nobly covered by the Warriston battalion.

"Three months after this, when Frederick was seated in his tent, surrounded by his staff and dictating orders, a private of the Guards limped in, supported by a stick, and kneeling presented him with a ring.

"'Ach, Gott, what is this?' said Frederick; 'Oho, 'tis my student of Macchiavelli; well, comrade, I followed your advice and saved my left wing.'

"'Thank God, who inspired me with the idea!' said Schreutzer.

"'For that day's work I name you a Captain in the Line, exclaimed the king.

"At Rosbach, where in the same year Frederick defeated the French, Peter gained his majority in the morning and his lieutenant-colonelcy in the evening. Then came the affair at Dresden, where the advice given by him at a council of war was so sound and skilful that he was appointed major-general. What think you of that, my young volunteer—in one year to have the private's shoulder-knot replaced by the aiguillette of a general officer?'

"It was talent, but strangely favoured by kingly caprice," said Monkton.

"Schreutzer succeeded my father in command of the Guards, when he fell under Frederick's displeasure and quitted the Prussian service in disgust. Remind me on the march to-morrow to tell you how that came about, for it is rather a good story."

"And now to bed," said Monkton, who had imbibed a con-

siderable quantity of wine; "at last we may put our 'beating orders' in the fire, for march is the word!"

"What are they?" asked Quentin.

"Warrants to raise men by beat of drum," explained the captain, politely. "They are originally signed by the royal hand, but copies are taken from them and signed by the secretary of state for war, and without them no officer can beat a recruiting drum anywhere. You have raised nearly a hundred men here, Dick, and must have made something of it."

"Much need," grumbled the lieutenant, making ineffectual attempts to buckle on his sword, as if he was going to bed with it. "I am Dick Monkton, of Monkton in Lothian, of course; but in name only, for those paternal acres are so covered by original sin in the shape of mortgages that never a penny comes to me; so I am compelled to live and be jolly on six shillings and sixpence per diem, less the infernal income tax; and being a fellow of a generous disposition, I am always losing my heart and my money among the fair sex."

"Good night, Mr. Kennedy," said Captain Warriston; "if you are still in the same mood of mind to-morrow, you may turn my letter to some account. The drum will beat at daybreak."

"Put your pride in a knapsack or wherever else it can be conveniently carried, my boy," said Monkton, making a fearful lurch over a chair; "volunteer and come with us to fight Napoleon and his Frenchmen." Then he began to sing, tipsily:

"Since some have from ditches
And coarse leather breeches
Been raised to be rulers and wallowed in riches,
Prythee, Dame Fortune, come down from thy wheel;
For if the gipsies don't lie
I shall be a general at least ere I die!"

"Ah, damme, but we are not in the Prussian service, like that old cock, Peter Shooter, or what's his name?"

Monkton was becoming seriously tipsy, so Quentin, on receiving a warning glance from Captain Warriston, took his candle and retired to No. 20 for the night, feeling sensibly that he had imbibed more wine than he was wont to do after supper at Rothallion.

He could not sleep, however, till the night was far advanced, and the knowledge that the drum was to beat by daybreak kept him nervously wakeful, lest he might not hear it, and perhaps be left behind. The drum was to beat, and *for him*! There was a strange charm in the idea: it seemed to realize somewhat of his old day-dreams and romantic aspirations. Already he felt himself a soldier, and bound for service and adventure! How much would he have to relate when he wrote to the good old

quartermaster, announcing that he was off to join the army, and *his own* old corps, the 25th, whose memory he so treasured, though his name, alas! was long since forgotten in its ranks.

And there was Flora—dear, loving, gentle Flora. When was he to write to her, and through what channel? Ah, if he could calculate on promotion like that of Peter Schreutzer! He had only been absent from Flora a night and a day, just four-and-twenty hours, and already weeks seemed to have elapsed, (what would months—what would years seem?) while the arrival of Cosmo and long prior events seemed to have happened but yesterday. Under these circumstances, severance frequently causes the same inverted ideas of *time*, that a sudden death or other great calamity occasions.

At the moment Quentin was dozing off to sleep, and to dream of past pleasures or of future triumphs (the ensign being long since in deep slumber on a sofa), he heard his two new friends parting in the corridor after having had one bottle more.

"I say, Warriston, old boy, see me to my door, and just shove me in—there's a good fellow—here it is—thanks," stammered Monkton; "may you not have been rash in giving such a fi—fi—fiery old Turk as Middleton of ours, a letter for—for—damme, a perfect stranger—perfect stranger?"

"Not at all," he heard Warriston reply; the lad has a bearing I like, and on his own good and unerring conduct as a gentleman and volunteer must depend his chances of ever wearing these honourable badges on his shoulders. (He shook his large gold epaulettes as he spoke.) One o'clock—in three hours the drum will beat! I hope we shall have a fine day; last night the rain fell as if old Noah had hove up his anchor again. Good-night, Monkton—sleep if you can."

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE YOUNG VOLUNTEER.

"When I was an infant, gossips would say
I'd when older be a soldier;
Rattles and toys I'd throw them away,
Unless a gun or a sabre.
When a younker up I grew,
I saw one day a grand review,
Colours flying set me dying,
To embark in a life so new.
Roll drums merrily—march away!—*Old Song.*

QUENTIN had been asleep—to him it seemed but five minutes, though two hours had elapsed—when he started as if he had

received an electric shock. The warning drum was being beaten loudly and sharply under his window, and soon after followed the long roll, whose summons admits of no delay even to the most weary soldier.

Half asleep and half refreshed, he sprang from bed; grey daylight was stealing faintly in, and all Ayr seemed yet a-bed, the shutters closed, the chimneys smokeless. The morning mist was curling in masses along the slopes of the uplands; the summits of the town steeples and the gothic tower of St. John were reddened by the first rays of the sun that was yet below the horizon, and the little drummer boy as he paced slowly to and fro, in heavy marching order, with a black glazed knapsack strapped on his back, and a white canvas havresack slung crosswise over his pipe-clayed swordbelt, seemed to be the only person abroad in the streets as yet.

"Rouse!" said a voice, which Quentin knew to be that of Captain Warriston, who knocked sharply on the room door; "pack your traps, Kennedy, as quickly as you can. My man will put your portmanteau on the baggage-cart. A cup of hot coffee awaits you in the dining-room. Never march with an empty stomach, unless you can't help it."

While dressing hurriedly, Quentin heard the worthy captain rousing his lieutenant, which seemed a process of some difficulty, and productive of considerable banter and vociferation. As for the ensign, he had never undressed or been in bed, so he was already awake, and accoutred with sword, sash, and gorget, and looked very pale and miserable as he swallowed his hot coffee in the twilight of the wainscoted dining-room.

The early morning air was chilly, and Quentin but half awake, felt his teeth chattering as he issued into the street. The reflection flashed on his mind that it was not yet too late to retrace his steps, and alter his intentions. But why do so? asked reason. What other course was open to him? On this morning, with his new friends and patrons—particularly Warriston, for whom he had conceived a great friendship—he felt his position was very different from what it was yesterday, when, without views, objects, or a defined future, he awoke among Gibbie Crossgrane's straw in the vault of Kilhenzie.

Already the soldiers of the recruiting parties, with their various recruits, were falling in. There were three sergeants, three corporals, three privates, three drummers, and three fifers of the 25th, the 90th (Lord Lynedoch's Greys), and the 94th, with fifty-five recruits, all sturdy rustics, with cockades of tricoloured ribbon streaming from their bonnets, for that most hideous of head-dresses, the round hat, was almost unknown then among the peasantry of Scotland.

All seemed sleepy, heavy-eyed, and were yawning drowsily, as they shouldered against each other, and shuffled awkwardly while forming line and answering to their names, which were called over by Monkton's sergeant, a portly old halberdier, named Norman Calder.

"Now then, Master William Monkton, are we to march without you, or must I detail a fatigue party to tumble you out of bed?" cried Warriston, angrily, in the hall of the inn. "There goes the last roll of the drum, and all are present but *you!*"

"Ugh!" said the lieutenant, as he came forth adjusting his regimentals in the street, tying his sash, and buckling his sword-belt, and certainly not looking the better for his potations overnight; "as Scott of Amwell says, 'I hate that drum's discordant sound'—'pon my soul, I do! Such a restless dog you are, Warriston! Two hours hence would have done just as well for you, and immensely better for all, than this. Half-past four, a.m.—damme!" he added, glancing up at a church-dial which was glittering in the rising sun; "this is a most unearthly proceeding, and likely to be the death of poor Pimple. Good morning, Kennedy, my young volunteer; how do you like this kind of work?"

Quentin felt bound to say he enjoyed it very much.

"Bah! after being two hours in bed, having to tumble up in this fashion, is just as pleasant as having to go out with a dead shot in the honeymoon, or in the morning on which you have made an assignation with a pretty girl on your way home; or having a bill returned on your hands; a horse lamed when the starting bell rings, or when you are about to ride a steeple chase, or lead a charge; or any other thing that annoys you, by jingo!"

As Quentin had never experienced any of the five grievances enumerated by Monkton, he could only laugh, and ask—

"Then what about 'the lark at Heaven's gate'—has his voice no charms?"

"I'd rather hear his morning reveille when going home to my quarters."

The scene had now become very animated. The soldiers, fifteen in number, were all in heavy marching order, with only their side-arms, however, and were all sturdy, weatherbeaten fellows, with whom Quentin found himself rather an object of interest, as he had given Sergeant Calder a couple of guineas to enable them all to drink his health.

Many of the townspeople were crowding round to see them depart; and many a repentant recruit now bade a last farewell to sobbing parents, to brother, or sister, or sweetheart, all deploring the step which they deemed would lead him to ruin

and death, for there were no marshal's batons to be found in the knapsacks of the 25th or 94th, as in those of "the Corsican Tyrant," whose name was as that of a bogle for nurses to scare their children with.

While Warriston, an indefatigable officer, bustled about getting the motley party into something like military order, and detailed a corporal and three men to take charge of the impressed cart which was to carry their baggage, with some of the soldiers' wives and children, his lieutenant lounged at the door of the Queen Anne's Head, smoking a pipe, with his shako very much over one of his wicked eyes, as he joked and bantered those about him.

"Come, landlord," said he to the sulky boniface, who made his appearance with a red Kilmarnock nightcap on his head; "give us a farewell smile, do, there's a good fellow; I'll take a kiss from your wife, too, on credit (I'm her debtor a long way already), and you may put both in the bill when we next halt here. Gad, Kennedy, these people hate the sight of a billet-order as the devil hates holy water. Those who grudge the British soldier a night's lodging should have a trial of a few Cossacks or Austrians; but it all comes of the levellers, the opposition, and the democrats, damme! So Pimple, my boy, have a dram—you have had your run of flirtation with the flax-dresser's daughter, and yet have got off without having to propose for the passée heiress, or go out about sunrise with the incensed parent."

"Yes," replied the ensign, playing with the tassels of his sash, and assuming a would-be gallant air; "close run, though—once thought I was nearly in for it."

"Ah, you're safe now; but what says the couplet?"

"What couplet? I don't know."

"It says that to you, my friend,

"From wedlock's noose thus once by fate exempt,
The next may prove, alas! a noose of hemp!"

The ensign was about to make an angry retort, when Warriston gave the command,

"Threes right—quick march! come, come, move off, gentlemen." The sharp drums and shrill fifes struck up merrily in the echoing streets (it was the unvarying 'Girl I left behind me'); a lusty cheer from the departing recruits was loudly responded to by the people around and from those at many a window. Others followed, loud, long, and hearty, and catching the spirit of enthusiasm from those about him, Quentin felt every pulse throb, every nerve and fibre quicken, as his heart became light and joyous, and as Warriston drew his arm through his own,

and falling into the rear of the party, they departed from the inn.

How different were Quentin's emotions now, when compared to the sense of dejection and desolation, with which, portmanteau in hand, he had entered that ancient caravanserai yesterday!

"Now for your first day's march, Kennedy," said the captain; "never mind the *past*—it is gone for ever, and is useless now."

"Unless it afford me some hint to guide me for the future."

"Right," said the captain; "faith! boy, I like your spirit and reflective turn."

The cheers of the people and the rattle of the drums, as the party marched over the new bridge of Ayr, defied every attempt at conversation. All viewed the departing band with interest, for, ere long, they would be all sent to the seat of war, and be before the enemy; and of those blue-bonneted recruits who were leaving the banks and braes of Ayr, and old Coila's hills and glens, few or none might ever return. But there was then a high spirit in all the British Isles.

The long dread of invasion from France, political and religious rancour, with years of continued victory by sea and land—the glories and the fall of Nelson and Abercrombie, the brilliant but terrible career of Napoleon following close on the atrocities of the French Revolution—all conspired to fill honest Mr. Bull's heart with a furore for military fame; he ceased to smoke the pipe of peace, and the worthy man's funny red coat and warlike pigtail were never off. Gillray's coloured caricatures of French soldiers in cocked hats and long blue coats, and of their "Corsican tyrant," in every ridiculous and degrading situation that art could conceive or malevolence inspire, filled every print-shop; and the press, such as it was, groaned alternately under puffs of self-glorification and scurrilous abuse of France and its emperor, with a systematic expression of true British contempt for anything foreign and continental. Thus the whole country swarmed with troops of every arm, and all Britain was a species of garrison, from London to Lerwick, and from Banff to Bristol.

They had been some hours on the march before Quentin thought of obtaining a very requisite piece of information—to wit, their destination, when he was informed by Captain Warriston that the three recruiting parties were to embark at Leith on board an armed smack or letter-of-marque, for Colchester barracks in England, where the three Scottish regiments were stationed.

"After I travel so far," said Quentin, "I do sincerely hope the commanding officer will approve of me."

"Rest assured that he will," replied Warriston, confidently; "he is a plain, sometimes rough old soldier, but he knows me well."

"Who is colonel of the regiment?"

"Lieutenant-General Lord Elphinstone is our colonel," said Monkton; "and our lieutenant-colonel being aged—an old Minden officer, indeed—has permission to sell out. Jack Middleton, the major, is in command at present, and as he is too poor to purchase, he is revenging himself upon the regiment."

"How?" asked Quentin, with surprise.

"Though our corps is a crack one (what corps is not so in its own estimation?) he harangues us daily on the bad discipline and disorder in which his predecessor has left us; so all have gone to school again, from the oldest captain down to the youngest fifer."

"Indeed," said the bewildered volunteer; "that is very hard!"

"So it is, damme! but old fellows who smelt powder against Washington at Brandywine, and under the Duke in Holland, at Alkmaar and Egmont-op-Zee, are now at the goose-step and pacing-stick; and woe to the private who fails to have the barrel and lock of his musket bright as silver, and his pouch bottled to perfection, so that he might shave or dress his pigtail in it. We have punishment parades, extra drills, kit-inspections, drums beating, bugles sounding all day, and often check-rolls thrice in the night, and orderlies flying all over the barracks like madmen, and all because old Jack Middleton has not enough of tin to purchase the lieutenant-colonelcy. There is little Pimple—by Jove! he'll not be in Colchester a week before the major frightens him into the measles."

"Who is to succeed the lieutenant-colonel?" asked Warriston, who laughed at the subaltern's angry description of the state of matters at head-quarters.

"The Horse Guards, those Fates who sit on high over the British soldier, alone know. Some good kind of fellow, I hope, before I rejoin; for rather than serve under old Middleton (excuse me, Warriston, as he is a friend of yours,) I'd send in my papers—go recruiting for the 2nd West India at Sierra Leone, or join that fine body of men, the York Rangers!"

"What are they?"

"A condemned corps, named for the good duke; but whose officers, damme, sleep at night with loaded pistols under their pillows, for fear of their own men."

"This is not very cheering for you, Kennedy," said Warriston, laughing heartily; "but you must not mind all Monkton says."

"No matter; I have given my word, and go I shall."

It was evident that Monkton was a little soured, for he alternately vowed himself tired of the service and then an enthusiast for it, and his corps in particular; but he was rather blue-

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devilled this morning, and uncheered by the blue sunny sky and golden cornfields, the songs of the birds and mild morning breeze; he swore at the long dusty road, and grumbled at the slowness of his promotion, and that by circumstances beyond his control, after fifteen years' service and having seen much fighting, he was only a lieutenant still; "but you will learn, ere long, Kennedy," he added, "that the lieutenants are the salt of the service, and do all the actual work. Middleton will judge of you, not from others, but from yourself alone. The battalion will likely go abroad under his orders; a month more may see us before the enemy, and you in possession of your epaulettes, if some poor sub—say Pimple here—is knocked on the head."

"Thank you," said Boyle; "why not suggest yourself—one sub is the same as another."

"Not at all—not at all; it would be no use. They never hit me seriously in Flanders or Denmark, and they wont do it in Spain or North Holland."

"My old friend Middleton must have changed sorely to have become the Tartar and martinet you describe him," said Warriston; "if so, he would have suited old Frederick of Prussia to a hair."

"You told us to remind you of a story which was worth telling."

"About Frederick and my father?"

"Exactly," said Quentin.

"And how he and I came to be in the Dutch service. Well, the story has something droll in it, and though some may have heard the affair, as it found its way into the newspapers, I shall give you the version which I gave to Mr. Thomas Holcroft, when he was preparing that very light and most readable work on the Life, Times, and Works of the Great Frederick, in thirteen huge royal octavo volumes."

"Then it is to be found there?"

On the contrary, he omitted it, not considering it quite a reather in his hero's cap."

"And the story——"

"Occurred in this way."

But the story with which Warriston beguiled a few miles of the morning march deserves, perhaps, a chapter to itself.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE PRUSSIAN GRENADIER.

"There was a criminal in a cart
 A-going to be hanged;
 Respite to him was granted,
 And cart and crowd did stand,
 To know if he would marry a wife
 Or rather choose to die;
 'T'other's the worst—drive on the cart!
 The criminal did reply."—*Old Ballad.*

You have all heard, I presume (the captain began), of the singular predilection which the late King of Prussia had for tall swinging grenadiers, how he raked all Germany and Pomerania to procure them, and had them formed into corps and companies sparing nothing in their equipment to add to their vast stature and warlike aspect—giving them the highest of heels to their boots, the tallest bearskin caps, and the longest and largest feathers that could be worn with safety to the neck and vertebral column. Those cross-belted Goliaths were quite a passion with him, and the first battalion of his Foot Guards, which my worthy father had the honour to command, was, no doubt, the most gigantic regiment in the Prussian army, perhaps in Europe; and to see its twelve companies of giants marching past in review order, and in open column, on that little meadow near Halle, which, from the time of the old Dessauer,* has been the training ground of the Prussian infantry, was truly a sight to marvel at and remember.

The Battalion Von Warriston was, to Frederick the Great, his pet band—the flower and pattern corps of his carefully-trained and well-developed army!

Now it chanced that one day, about the year 1780, he had been riding in the environs of Berlin, attended only by Strutzki, his old Putkammer orderly, with the gunpowder-spotted visage. As he pottered along on his old shambling horse, with a pair of large spectacles on his nose—the royal nose, I mean—one eye was fixed on his bridle and the other on Herr Doctor Johann Georg Zimmerman's then famous but dreary work on Solitude, with his flap pockets stuffed with letters from Voltaire and Hume, general orders, proof-sheets of plays, and other rubbish, he sud-

* Prince Leopold, of Anhalt Dessau, born there in 1676, the bravest of three generations who held the highest rank in the Prussian army.—*General Seydlitz's Life.*

denly saw something in the opinions of the Herr Doctor which displeased him, and jotting off a note on the subject, he despatched it by Strutzki.

Then resuming his meditations he rode on alone into the fields, smoking a pipe which had belonged to his old and faithful comrade, Seydlitz, and which he had picked up on the field of Rosbach, when that general gave his usual signal for the Hussars to charge by flinging his pipe into the air.

In a lonely place he came suddenly upon a peasant girl who possessed remarkable beauty, but that which he greatly preferred, astonishing stature. She was fully six feet, and so splendidly proportioned that Frederick reined up his horse and slung his pipe at his button-hole to observe her, which he could do for some time unobserved, as she was busy twining creepers and flowers over the front paling of a cottage named the Wilde Katze, a wayside tavern.

"Bey'm Henker!" thought he, "could I but get you married to one of my grenadiers, my long-legged Fräulein, what sons you might have! What recruits—what a progeny of giant children to recruit the next generation of my guards!"

The tall girl now perceived the king observing her, and curtsied and laughed, for she had no idea of his rank. His horse furniture was shabby, and his own appearance was far from being stately or imposing. He stooped about the shoulders, and had a snuffy drop at the end of his nose. Over his uniform and decorations he wore a greasy old military surtout-coat of blue cloth, lined with white merino, its buttons, sleeves, and all of the plainest kind; an old battered cocked-hat, with what had once been a white feather binding the edge of it, and its rim being perforated by musket-shot; a pair of common dragoon pistols in holsters without flaps, and a pair of rusty spurs on long jack-boots that had never been blackened since they left the maker's hands, though they were greased by Strutzki every morning.

"What is your name, my handsome Fräulein?" he inquired, while lifting his hat.

"Gretchen Viborg," replied the tall beauty.

"Are you married?" he asked with increasing suavity.

"No, mein Herr."

"But anxious to be, doubtless?" said Frederick, perpetrating a wink.

Then the girl, supposing that this funny old man was about to make some proposal to her, burst into a fit of laughter, in which the king good-humouredly joined, and then asked,

"How old are you?"

"Nearly twenty, mein herr."

"Good. Are you the keeper of the Wilde Katze?"

"No—my father is."

"Would you like to earn easily a rix-dollar!"

"That will I do readily, mein herr," said the girl, coming briskly forward, for a rix-dollar was then about the value of four of our guineas.

"Then you must deliver a note for me?"

"Where?"

"In the city."

"And to whom, mein herr?"

"To the Colonel von Warriston at the palace near the Weiss Saal."

The girl, little suspecting what was in store for her, curtsied and signified her readiness, while the king, drawing forth his tablets, and using his holster for a desk, wrote to my father in this manner:—

"MY DEAR COLONEL VON WARRISTON,

"On receipt of this order, you are to marry *the tallest* of your grenadiers to the bearer thereof, taking particular care to have the ceremony performed in your own presence; and for the execution of this, I hold you responsible.

"FRIEDRICH."

"P.S.—If he refuse, to pandau with him, until further orders."

"Can you read, Fräulein?" asked he, while holding this remarkable order.

"No, mein Herr."

"Good; then there is the less use for a seal, which I have not here." He placed the note and the rix-dollar in the large fair hand of the girl, and added, "I have noted this place—the Wilde Katze in my tablets, and I trust to your honesty and fidelity, Gretchen, in delivering my note without delay, as the matter is of great consequence to me, and may not prove unpleasant to yourself." And giving her a look that somehow impressed her, he put spurs to his old charger, and shambled off.

As ignorant of the contents of the letter as of the exalted rank of its writer, Gretchen Viborg was hurrying along the road towards Berlin, when she suddenly remembered that she had to keep an appointment with her lover, a remarkably jealous little fellow, who had a mill on the Spree—an assignation which the delivery of this note would completely mar! While pausing to consider this dilemma, honesty impelling her forward, and love or fear staying her steps, she met an old crone who was employed by her at the Wilde Katze, to till the ground, carry wood and do

other out-door work ; and supposing it was all one *who* delivered the note, provided that it safely reached its destination, she offered her a ducat to bear it to the palace near the White Hall.

Now this old crone could read ; she scanned the note, saw the whole bearings of the case, and knew who the writer was in an instant. She grinned a horrible grin of intense satisfaction, undertook the mission, and already beheld in prospect her victim—the tallest grenadier !

This cunning hag was past fifty years of age, and one of her legs was shorter than the other leg at least by half an inch ; she stooped in gait and was not much more than four feet high, and was remarkably hideous, even for a continental woman, her face being a mass of wrinkles, her pointed chin covered with wiry sprouts of grey hair, while her teeth were reduced to a few yellow fangs ; thus, great was my father's astonishment, when he perused the note which she gave him faithfully at the palace-gate, just as he was mounting his charger to join the evening parade of his boasted battalion of the Guards.

He was too familiar with the handwriting of the great Frederick to doubt for a moment the authenticity of the note ; but he could by no means reconcile its singular contents with the extreme years and appalling aspect of the old witch who brought it, and he surveyed them alternately for some time, in utter bewilderment, till the "P.S." about Spandau, that formidable state prison in Brandenburg, made him dread a trip there in person, if the king's orders were trifled with or delayed ; so turning with repugnance from the woman, who continued to grin and drop endless curtsies by his side, he summoned the sergeant-major.

"Who is the tallest of our grenadiers ?" he asked.

"Otto Vogelwiede," replied the sergeant, with a profound salute.

"How tall is he ?"

"Six feet, eight inches and a quarter."

"Is he on parade with his company ?"

"No, Herr Colonel—on duty."

"Where ?"

"With the guard at the Zeughaus." (This was the arsenal on the narrow bridge over the Spree.)

"Have him relieved by the next file for duty, and brought here immediately."

Private Vogelwiede, a sturdy Silesian campaigner, who had been wounded at Cunnersdorf, and had served under my father in all the great battles of the Seven Years' War, soon appeared at the palace, with a mingled expression of surprise and alarm on his large visage, supposing that some misdemeanour was to

be alleged against him; but this soon changed into downright horror, when my father, with a manner oddly indicative of half comicality and entire commiseration, read the king's peremptory order, and pointed to the blooming bride.

"Sturm und Gewitter!" swore the luckless grenadier in great wrath; "do you mean to say, Herr Colonel, that I am to marry this old bag of bones—this very shrivling?"

"My poor Vogelwiede, it is marry, or march to Spandau."

"Ach Gott, what an old vampire it is!" said Vogelwiede, shuddering.

"I am utterly bewildered, comrade," said my father.

"In mercy to me, Herr Colonel, tell me *what* I have done that I am to be punished thus?"

"I can't say, my poor fellow, that I understand the affair in any way; but we all know our father Frederick, and that the dose, however nauseous, must be swallowed. You must either be chained to her, or to a thirty-six pound shot in Spandau—a companion you will not get rid of, even by day."

"Der Teufel! der Teufel!" groaned the grenadier, who was actually perspiring with the idea of the whole affair, while the old woman, with her grey hairs, yellow fangs, and grimy wrinkles, grinned like some gnome sent by the Ruberzahl, or a witch from the Blocksberg; and to him it seemed as the sentence of death when my father said, —

"Send for the chaplain of the brigade, and desire him to bring his prayer-book and surplice."

"Oh, Colonel, remember Cunnersdorf, and how when a boy I held Fieldmarshal Keith dying in my arms at Hochkirchen—I was his favourite orderly," urged poor Vogelwiede, melted almost to tears; but it was espouse or Spandau, and he was married in the military chapel, to his own intense misery, to the utter bewilderment of his comrades, who knew not what to make of the affair, and to the exulting joy of the hideous old crone.

Six months after, Frederick returned from the reviews at Halle to Berlin, and desired my father to bring before him the couple who had been married by his orders.

"Ach Gott!" he exclaimed, on seeing the grinning hag and the miserable grenadier, who already looked grey and worn; "what the devil is this you have done, Herr Colonel?"

"I obeyed your majesty's singular command," replied my father, haughtily.

"Is this the woman to whom you have married Otto Vogelwiede, the premier grenadier of my Guards?"

"'Tis the woman who bore your Majesty's somewhat peremptory order, as all the corps can testify."

"Der Teufel! she is no more to compare to the one who received it, than a cup of Dresden china is to a bowl of Bunzlau clay! But I shall find her out yet, and married she shall be to the next tallest man in the battalion, so sure as Heaven hears me! and as for you, Colonel—dummer Teufel—as for you——"

"No more dummer Teufel (blockhead) than yourself, Frederick of Prussia!" exclaimed my father, furiously. "This to me? Have you forgotten my services, and that day at Amoneburg, when side by side we built up breastworks of the fallen dead, and fired over them?"

"I have not, Herr Colonel; but potztausend!——"

"Remember that I am the well-born Warriston von Warriston, which in plain Scottish means *of that ilk*, and I shall not be sworn at even by a king of Prussia."

Frederick danced with rage in his old jackboots, and dashed his Rosbach pipe upon the floor, exclaiming——

"Out of my sight, sir! Begone to your Bergschotten.* I have done with you!"

Whether Gretchen Viborg was married to the next tallest grenadier, or to the miller on the Spree, I know not, for that very day my father doffed the uniform of which he was so proud, the trappings of the 1st Guards—the same uniform in which Frederick was buried six years after at Potsdam, and resigned his commission, in which he was succeeded by Peter Schreutzer, the king's new favourite. Entering the service of the States General, he was made Colonel-in-Chief of their Scots Brigade, then consisting of six battalions, in one of which I obtained a cadetship; so you may perceive the strange chain of events by which—because Gretchen Viborg had to meet her miller, and her note found another bearer—I ultimately find myself a captain in his Britannic Majesty's 94th Foot, and in the service of my native country."

We shall have other marches of more importance to detail than the first essay of our young volunteer, who, though cheered from time to time by the merry music of the drums and fifes (which, in fact, are more inspiring and martial than any brass band can ever be), found the route weary enough by the pre-macadamite roads of those days, which were somewhat like the dry beds of mountain burns. So marching was rough and weary, yet Quentin never flinched, as they proceeded by the dark, heathy, and solitary hills of the Muirkirk-of-Kyle, by Carnwath, where a party of the Gordon Highlanders, under Logan of that ilk, joined them, and by Kirknewton, where, from an eminence, over which the roadway

* Scots Highlanders; this is a true anecdote of Frederick's caprice.

wound, he saw, for the first time, the wooded expanse of the beautiful Lothians, with the swelling outline of Arthur's Seat, the blue Firth, widening to a sea, the fertile hills of Fife, the lordly Ochil mountains, and those of thirteen counties, stretching far away even to the distant Lammermuirs, and in the middle distance, grey, dim, and smoky, the "Queen of the North, upon her hilly throne."

Then the soldiers hailed her with a cheer and a roll on the drums, announcing that there ended their last day's march.

CHAPTER XXVI.

COLCHESTER BARRACKS.

"Hail, sweet recruiting service, pleasing toil,
Ball-room campaigns, tea-parties, dice and Hoyle!
Ye days when dandling was my only duty,
Envied by cits, caressed by every beauty;
Envied by cits, so scared by every glance,
Shot at their daughters, going down the dance."

Military Magazine, 1812.

FAITHFUL to his promise, before embarking, Quentin Kennedy wrote from Edinburgh to his friend the old quartermaster, informing him of the step he had taken, of the lucky chance that had turned up for him in the Queen Anne's Head at Ayr, and that he was off to join the army as a simple volunteer; but being resolved to owe all to himself and to his own spirit, courage, and energy, and to prevent his old friend, Lord Rohallion, from doing anything, strange to say, he did not mention what regiment of the line he had chosen, though he knew well that the mystical No. 25 would have made the hearts of the veteran general and the quartermaster leap within them, while poor old Jack Andrews would be certain to get helplessly groggy in honour of the occasion.

He sent no messages or memories to any one, for the letter was indited amid the hurly-burly of Poole's gay and then well-known military coffee-house in Prince's-street, nearly opposite the North Bridge; and Captain Warriston, who was standing fully accoutred with a group of other officers of various Scottish regiments, all talking, laughing, and smoking, urged him "to be sharp," as they had not a moment to lose before the mail started, and that the smack, *Lord Nelson*, had her topsail loose; so he sent no remembrance to his dear Flora Warrender, though he sealed his letter with a sigh, and his soul seemed to go with it to her.

Sailing in an armed Leith ship, without convoy, Captain War-

riston's detachments of recruits, after beating against a head wind for two weeks, but without encountering a storm, a gale, or an enemy's ship of war, made the coast of Essex, landed at Harwich, and marched to Colchester Barracks, where each subaltern reported himself to his commanding officer, and handed over his detachment of recruits, doubtless glad to be rid of them.

How often were the last scene with Flora, those last words and those last kisses, under the old sycamores in the avenue, rehearsed over and over again.

"Ah," thought he, "could I but persuade myself that she will not entirely forget me; that some tender recollections, some soft memory of the poor lonely and friendless lad, who loved her so well, will remain in her heart, now that I am far away—gone she knows not where, but gone for ever! For ever!—then what will love or memory avail me?"

The novelty of his situation, the sudden and remarkable change of scene, the short sea voyage, the crowded and somewhat noisy barracks of Colchester, then filled with troops, preparing by hourly training, prior to their departure for the seat of war; squads undergoing manual, platoon, and pacing-stick drill, others worked up in companies, battalions, and brigades, the general bustle and light-heartedness of all around him; the new occupation, new faces and new episodes, all so different from his former monotonous life in that old castle by the Firth of Clyde—a life that seemed like a dream now—soon weaned Quentin from his sadder thoughts; and he was startled to find that, after a time, instead of brooding over Flora's image and idea perpetually, he could only think of her occasionally, and ere long, that he began to take an interest in the crowds of ladies who came to view the evening parades, to promenade with the officers who were not on duty, and to hear the bands play. "Love sickness, according to our revised medical code, is nothing more than a disarranged digestion," says a writer; so, in this year of the world—five thousand and odd, according to Genesis, and Heaven knows how many more, according to geology—no one dies of love, and, in the jovial barracks of Colchester, our friend Quentin showed no signs of the malady.

But we are anticipating.

The battalion of the 25th, or the King's Own Borderers, to which he was attached, occupied a portion of the stately and spacious barracks, which were built for the accommodation of ten thousand infantry, and had a fine park of artillery attached to them. These have all been since pulled down by an absurd spirit of mistaken economy, so that there are barely quarters for a single regiment in the town.

On the day after his arrival, anxious to create a good impression, he made a most careful toilet, and with a throbbing heart was introduced by Monkton to the officer commanding, the irritable Major Middleton, of whom he had heard so much, and to whom he presented the letter of introduction and recommendation given by his good friend Captain Warriston, who unfortunately was compelled to be absent elsewhere.

The major was a fine-looking old man, who had entered the service from the militia somewhat late in life, and hence the extreme slowness of his promotion, for he was now near his sixtieth year. He had a clear, keen, and bright blue eye; a suave, but grave and decided manner, with a deep and authoritative tone of voice. He still wore his thin hair queued, though after being reduced to seven inches in length, by the general order of 1804, by another order in 1808, the entire army was shorn of those appendages.

Fearing a mutiny, or something like it, the obnoxious mandate was countermanded the next day, but, Ichabod! the glory had departed. The regimental barbers had done their fatal work, and not a pigtail remained in the service, from the Life Guards to the Shetland Volunteers, save among a few privileged men of the old school, who stuck to it in defiance alike of taste and authority; and one of these was Major Middleton, who now appeared in full uniform, with his snow-white shirt-frill peeping through his gorget,—a badge retained till 1830—and a spotless white waistcoat covering the comely paunch, while his queue, seven inches long, with its black silk rosette, wagged gracefully at the back of his fine old head, which was powdered by time to a whiteness his servant could never achieve with the puff.

He cordially shook hands with Quentin and with Monkton, and welcoming the latter back to head-quarters, bowed them to chairs with great formality, his sword and pigtail going up and down like pump-handles the while, and then with his sturdy back planted against the chimney-piece, he proceeded to read over the letter of Warriston, Quentin in the meantime undergoing the pleasant process of being occasionally eyed askance with those clear, keen eyes—and a steady glance they had—the glance of one who had often been face to face with death and danger, in the East Indies and the West, in America, and wherever conquests were to be added to Britain's growing empire.

"My old friend Warriston recommends you highly, Mr. Kennedy—very highly indeed," said the major, as he folded the letters and again shook Quentin by the hand; "but I hope that the step you are taking has the full concurrence of all who are interested in your welfare."

With a heightened colour, Quentin begged the worthy major to be assured that it had.

"I need not tell you, my young friend, that no ordinary bravery is required of the gentleman volunteer, for something more dashing than mere service in the ranks is necessary to win the notice of those in authority and to obtain a commission in His Majesty's service. I trust, therefore, that you have weighed well and examined your mind, and are assured that you possess the qualifications necessary for the profession—I may well say, the perilous career—on which you are about to enter."

"Qualifications, sir?" stammered Quentin, who was somewhat oppressed by the major's exordium, and began to think of Doninie Skail's Greek and Latin roots.

"Yes; for the task before you requires a daring spirit, and a most stoical indifference to privation, to suffering, and to death, as you will have to bear a voluntary part in every dangerous or arduous enterprise, on every desperate duty; and have to volunteer for every forlorn hope and reckless adventure."

"I have weighed well, major, and I shall shrink from nothing! I long only for the opportunity of showing that I shall be—shall be what my father was before me," said Quentin, with flashing eyes and quivering lips, while he felt that these were not the kind of men to boast before.

The old major regarded the lad attentively, and said—

"Give me your hand again; I like your spirit, and hope ere long to wet your commission and welcome you as a brother officer. I enforce the strictest obedience, and some term me severe, yet I hope you will like me; for, if pleased with you, your future prospects shall be my peculiar care."

"I thank you, sir," said Quentin, with a very full heart.

"I like to regard the regiment as one large family; and when we consider the manifold dangers we dare, and the sufferings we endure together, all soldiers—officers and men alike—more than any *other* human community, have reasons for strong mutual attachment, and for feeling themselves indeed brothers. There are some of the brotherhood, however, over whom I have, at times, to keep a tight hand—yourself, for instance—Dick Monkton, eh?"

"True, major, the adjutant has come to me in his harness more than once for my sword; but, like a good fellow, you always sent it back again," said Monkton, laughing.

"Two remarks of the great General Monk should always be borne in mind by those who enter the service," said the major, who seemed a well-read and intelligent officer; "and in youth I

learned them by rote, and so have never forgotten them since. 'War, the profession of a soldier, is that of all others which, as it conferreth most honour upon a man who therein acquitteth himself well, so it draweth the greatest infamy upon one who demeaneth himself ill; for *one* fault committed can *never* be repaired, and *one* hour causeth the loss of that reputation which hath been thirty years acquiring!' Elsewhere he says, 'A soldier must be always ready to confront extremity of danger by extremity of valour, and overtop fury with a higher resolution. A soldier ought to fear nothing but *God and Dishonour*, and the officer who commands should feel for him as a parent does for his child!' And now, to become more matter of fact, Monkton will tell you, Mr. Kennedy, all about a volunteer's outfit; the plainer, and the less there is of it, the better."

"Thanks, sir; you are most thoughtful."

"You shall have to carry the arms and accoutrements of a private, and a knapsack too, perhaps, under some circumstances, till luck turns up a commission for you. In all respects you will be treated as a gentleman; but doing the duty and yielding the implicit obedience of a private soldier. Do you understand me?"

"Perfectly, sir," replied Quentin, cheerfully.

"As for the knapsack," said Monkton, "its weight matters little if your heart be light, my friend."

Quentin smiled, as if he meant to confront fortune boldly, and the future too.

"We are now under orders to hold ourselves in readiness for foreign service, and a fortnight at farthest will see the regiment on board ship."

"For where?" asked Monkton.

"The continent of Europe."

Quentin was glad to hear this, as he knew that his funds would not last him long in Colchester, and if reduced to his volunteer pay of one shilling per diem, current coin of the realm, what would become of him then?

"You shall dine with me at the mess to-day as my guest, Mr. Kennedy," said the major, "and I shall have the pleasure of introducing you to the corps."

"And as my guest to-morrow, Quentin," said Monkton; "it is the last time we shall have our legs under its blessed mahogany, as it is to be broken up."

"What—the table?"

"No, the mess. Adieu till the drum beats, major."

With Monkton, Quentin quitted Middleton's quarters, extremely well-pleased with his interview, convinced that the

lieutenant must have quizzed him about the major's alleged severity, and now with satisfaction feeling himself in some manner a member of the corps and of the service, a part, or portion of the 25th Foot.

His uniform, a plain scarlet coatee, faced, lapelled, and buttoned like that of an officer, with two little swallow-tails nine inches long (then the regulation), though destitute of lace or epaulettes, with his other requisites, made a sad hole in his little exchequer; and, as he sat in his room that night, and counted over the fifteen that remained of the good quartermaster's guineas, he felt something like a miser, and trembled for the future.

However, fifteen guineas were more than a subaltern's pay for a month; he was only to be two weeks in barracks, and when once in camp, a small sum with rations would go a long way. He had a subaltern's quarters assigned him, with an officer's allowance of coal, candle, and barrack furniture—to wit: one hard wood table; two ditto chairs, of the Windsor pattern; an elegant coal-box, like a black iron trough, bearing the royal arms, and the huge enigmatical letters B.O., of which he could make nothing; a pair of bellows, fire-irons, fender, and an iron candlestick, unique in form and colour.

These, with a pallet, formed his principal household gear, and for two at least of the remaining fourteen days he would have the luxury of the festive mess, the perfection of a dinner table; and thereafter, as he had been told, it would be broken up, its rich old plate and appurtenances consigned to iron-bound chests, and left behind in the barrack stores, and many who dined therewith might never meet around that jolly table more, for war and peril were before them, and the dust would be gathering on the forgotten mess chests, as the grass would be sprouting on the graves of the slain.

But little thought "The Borderers" of that—for the soldier luckily for himself, is seldom of a very reflective turn—when the orderly drum and fife struck up "The Roast Beef" in front of the mess-house to announce that dinner was being served; and there Quentin hurried, in company with the major and Monkton.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE LOST LETTER.

"And when they talk of him, they shake their heads,
And whisper one another in the ear :
And he that speaks doth grip the hearer's wrist,
Whilst he that hears makes fearful action,
With wrinkled brows, with nods, with rolling eyes."

Shakespeare.

As Quentin's heart foreboded, the Master of Rohallion made the best use of his time with Flora Warrender ; but without much avail. Late events had engendered in her breast a spirit of obstinacy and antagonism to his proposals, together with a desire for freedom of thought and liberty of action that proved very damaging to the cause of Cosmo, and in a fit of spleen he departed for a week or two, to visit Earl Hugh at Eglinton ; for though by no means a marrying man, the Honourable Cosmo, as we have stated, conceived that, in the present state of his finances, he might get through the world,—“battle the watch,” as he phrased it,—pretty well, if he obtained the lands of Ardgour, the accumulated rents of which had been so long under trust, and would prove to him a very lucky accession, even though encumbered by Flora Warrender as a wife or appendage. But on obtaining the command of a regiment of the line, with all the perquisites which then attended that appointment, he did not despair of ultimately getting rid of his *bêtes noires*, the children of Judah.

Thus his cold hauteur and nonchalance on one hand, and Lady Rohallion's steady resolve on the other to bend her to their will, together with sorrow for Quentin, whom she viewed as a victim, rendered Flora Warrender inexorable in her opposition, and, as Lord Rohallion said, their own mismanagement still continued to spoil the whole affair.

After an absence of some days Cosmo returned, and resolved to make a last effort with Flora, and thought to pique her by praises of the fair daughters of Earl Hugh, the Ladies Jane, Lilius, and Mary ; but this artifice was so shallow that she merely laughed when she heard him, while poor simple Lady Rohallion feared that his heart had really been affected in another quarter.

“And so you really admire Lady Lilius Montgomery, our old friend's daughter ?” she asked, as they sat in the bay window of the old yellow drawing-room.

"I always did so," replied the Master; "there is certainly an exquisite air of refinement about the girl, and she has a splendid seat on horseback."

"Her air is peculiar to all the Montgomerys; I remember me well of Earl Alexander, who was shot by the villain Mungo Campbell, and he had the air of a prince! But what do you think of Lady Lilies?"

"Think?" pondered Cosmo, dreamily, as he lay back in a satin fauteuil, and gazed on the far-stretching landscape that was steeped in sunny haze.

"Yes," said his mother, anxiously.

"I think she has *not* the lands and rental of Ardgour, or their equivalent."

"Cosmo, Cosmo," said Lady Rohallion, with asperity, "I would have you to love Flora for herself, and herself only."

"My dear mother, you old-fashioned folks in Carrick here are sadly behind the age; but I am booked for foreign service, and a wife would only prove a serious encumbrance after all."

"Flora Warrender may change, or, what would be better, she may know her own mind before, or long before, you come back."

"Perhaps," sneered Cosmo; "love of change or change of love effects miracles in the female heart at times. Till *then*, we must content ourselves with drawing stakes, while I march off, not exactly with the honours of war, but with the band playing 'the girl I left behind me'—very consoling it is no doubt, damme!"

"Do you really love that girl, Cosmo?" asked the old lady, looking up from a mysterious piece of needlework, with which she always believed herself to be busy, and mistaking Cosmo's wounded self-esteem for a softer sentiment.

"Love her—yes, of course I do—that is, well enough, perhaps to marry her, as marriage goes now-a-days; but" (and here he spoke with concentrated passion) "I *hate* the beggar's brat who has come between her and me!"

"Oh, Cosmo, don't say so, I implore you!" said Lady Rohallion, sighing bitterly; "after all the past, and with the doubt and mystery that overhang his future, I cannot bear to hear our lost Quentin spoken of thus."

"Poor chick—our lost darling!" said Cosmo; "but after seventeen years spent in the Household Brigade, to be out-manceuvred by a country Dolly such as Flora and a fellow like this Quentin of yours, is simply and decidedly absurd!" he added, with fierce grimace, while his father, who entered at that moment and overheard him, laughed heartily at his chagrin.

And now about this time John Legate, the tall spindle-shanked

running footman, brought, among other letters from Maybole, one for the Master, endorsed "on His Majesty's Service," and another for Mr. John Girvan, so worn, frayed, and covered with postage-marks, that the good man was quite puzzled by its appearance, and thrice wiped his spectacles to decipher all the names and dates, until the dominie, who was seated by him, beside a friendly jug of toddy, suggested that candles should be procured, as the twilight was deepening into night, and the interior of the missive would resolve all their doubts and expectations.

It was opened, and proved to be from Quentin Kennedy—from Quentin, and dated at Poole's Military Coffeehouse, Edinburgh, more than a month back! He had addressed it simply to the Castle of Rohallion, and it had gone by mail and stage over all Britain, until some chance hand, endorsing "try Ayrshire," sent it to its destination.

"Awa soldiering as a volunteer! Wae is me, wae is me, but this is pitiful, exceedingly pitiful!" exclaimed the dominie, lifting up his hands and eyes; "think of my wasted latinity!"

"Dominie, you are a gowk! I like the lad's spirit, and respect it," said the quartermaster, whose eyes were so full that he could scarcely peruse the letter; "but he's ower young for such hard work. I mind well of what I had to go through in my time in Germany and America."

"Ower young, think ye?"

"But he is hardy and manly."

"According to Polybius, in his sixth book, the Romans could be soldiers, indeed, *had* to be soldiers, in their seventeenth year."

"Bother your Romans! fill your jug—a steaming brimmer, and drain it to Quentin's health and success, and his safety too."

Then standing up erect, the quartermaster drained his jug at a draught, a process promptly followed by the dominie; but after what they had imbibed already, it had the effect of rapidly multiplying the lights and other objects, and also tended to make their utterance thick and indistinct.

"I must away to my lord wi' this braw news," said Girvan; "the puir lad! he didna deceive me after all, but wrote when he had time. And this Captain Warriston who befriended Quentin—(God bless him, say I!)—befriended him, dominie, because he was a soldier's son. Ah, dominie, dominie!—that is the *freemasonry of the service*, which makes all in it brothers—the true spirit of camaraderie! Another jorum to the health of this captain, whoever he be."

"Bring forth the *amphora*—the greybeard o' whisky; but John, John," said the dominie, shaking his old wig sententiously, "what saith Habakkuk?"

"How the deevil should I ken? and it is but little I care," added the irreverent quartermaster.

"He saith, 'Woe unto him that giveth his neighbour drink, that putteth a bottle to him, and maketh him drunken,' " said the dominie, balancing himself by turns on each leg; and opening and shutting each eye alternately.

"Drunken, you whaislin precentor?"

"Yea, as thou, wicked quartermaster, hast made me, and when we are close on the hour 'o' night's black arch the keystone,' as our Burns has it."

"Never mind, dominie, the night is dark, and naebody will see you," stammered Girvan; "stick your knees into the saddle—gie your powny the reins, and he'll take you straight home, as he usually does. But I must away to my lord with this news; and so good-night. Now, dominie, steady—eyes front, if you can!—hat cocked forward, cockade over the left eye—queue dressed straight with the seam of the coat—head up, little finger of each hand on the seam of the breeches—left foot thrown well out—pike advanced—forward, march! and hip, hip, hurrah for Quentin, the volunteer!"

And arm in arm the two old toppers quitted the "snuggery," the dominie to go home in care of his pony, and his entertainer to seek Lord and Lady Rohallion before they retired for the night.

That sure tidings had come of Quentin's safety occasioned the noble and worthy couple sincere joy.

"So, so," said the old lord; "it is as I feared—the poor lad has joined the service."

"As a volunteer," added Girvan, with great empressment.

"As a poor, friendless volunteer, Winny; think of that, when one line from me to the Duke of York would give him an ensigncy. We have cruelly mismanaged this boy's prospects! I would that we knew the regiment he has joined; but, strange to say, he omits to mention it."

In his joy and hurry, the quartermaster had never thought of the omission.

"This officer, Warriston, whom he mentions, must be a right good fellow, and his name may be a clue. We shall search the Army List to-morrow, John; till then, good-night."

Tidings that a letter had come from Quentin at last, spread through the castle like wild-fire, and it was the first news with which Flora's maid greeted her, when, an hour before the usual time, she tapped on her bedroom door, and, as the reader may imagine, the abigail was despatched at once to the quartermaster for a sight of the all-important letter, which she took care to

read before it reached the hands of her impatient young mistress. Flora read it over twice or thrice, examining all the successive postmarks which indicated its devious wanderings. In the text there was no mention of her. She was disappointed at first, but after reflecting, she deemed that his silence was delicate and wise.

There were great and genuine rejoicings in the servants'-hall, where the gamekeepers, grooms, the gardeners, Mr. Spillsby the butler, John the running-footman, the housemaids, and Old Andrews, made such a clatter and noise that they kindled the somewhat ready wrath of the Master, who rang his bell furiously to "still the infernal hubbub," as he lay a-bed reading his missive, which was not quite to his taste; and, as for the veteran Jack Andrews, he got most disreputably tipsy by imbibing a variety of drams to Quentin's health in Mr. Spillsby's pantry; and, in short, the quartermaster's letter proved a nine days' wonder in Rohallion.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A LAST REJECTION.

"Ae fond kiss and then we sever!
 Ae farewell, alas for ever!
 Deep in heart-wrung tears I'll pledge thee,
 Warring sighs and groans I'll wage thee;
 Who shall say that Fortune grieves him
 While the star of hope she leaves him?"—BURNS.

IGNORING the source or cause of the excitement among the household, Cosmo lounged into the breakfast-parlour, where the silver urns were hissing amid a very chaste equipage, and where the September sun was shining in through clusters of sweet briar and monthly roses, and as he seated himself he handed to his father a long official-like document, at the sight of which his mother changed colour, and even Flora, who looked charming in her smiling radiance, lace frills, and morning dress of spotted white muslin, lifted her dark eyelashes with interest.

"What's the matter, Cosmo?—your leave cancelled?" asked Rohallion.

"Oh no, my lord—nothing so bad as that."

"A summons from head-quarters, I see."

"Something very like it," drawled Cosmo; "read it to the ladies. Spillsby, some coffee—no cream."

The letter ran briefly thus:—

"Horse Guards, &c. &c.—

"SIR,—I have the honour to acquaint you, by direction of His Royal Highness the Field-Marshal Commanding-in-Chief, that it is now in his power to appoint you to one of the second battalions lately raised for the line and for immediate foreign service, provided that within a fortnight you are prepared to assume the command, in which case your name shall appear in the next Gazette.

"I have the honour to be, &c. &c.—

"Major the Hon. C. Crawford,
&c. &c."

"A fortnight!—are we to have you only for a fortnight, my dear, dear Cosmo?" exclaimed Lady Rohallion, all her maternal tenderness welling up at once.

"You will not, I fear, have me so long, my dear mother," said he; "and you, Flora, he added in a low voice, as he purposely held his plate across her for a wing of grouse; "and you——"

"Give you full leave to go, with my dearest wishes, and your heart unbroken. Come, Cosmo," she added in the same low voice, and with a soft smile; "let us part friends, at least."

Cosmo's eyes seemed to shrink and dilate, while a cold and haughty smile spread over his otherwise handsome features, as he turned quietly to discuss his grouse, and said to the butler,—

"Spillsby, tell the groom to have a horse saddled for my man—take Minden, the bay mare—as I must despatch a letter to Maybole within an hour."

Breakfast was hurried over in silence and constraint; then Cosmo, kissing the brow of his mother, who was already in tears,—for the only real emotion that lingered in the Master's heart was a regard for his mother—played with the silk tassels of his luxurious dressing-gown, and lounged into the library to write his answer to the military secretary, and profess himself to be completely, as in duty bound, at the disposal of His Royal Highness, and proud to accept the command offered him.

He soon penned the letter, and sealed it with the coronet, the shield *gules* and fess *ermine* of Rohallion, muttering as he did so,—

"The line—the line after all; a horrid bore, indeed, to come down to that!"

He threw open his dressing-gown, as if it stifled him, almost tearing the tasselled girdle as he did so, and planting his foot on the buhl writing table, lounged back in an easy-chair, where he strove to read up Sir David Dundas's "Eighteen Manœuvres," and fancied how he would handle his battalion without clubbing the companies or bringing the rear rank in front; by taking them

into action with snappers instead of flints, as old Whitelock did at Buenos Ayres, or committing other little blunders, which might prove very awkward if a brigade of French twelve-pounders were throwing in grape and canister at half-musket range.

Soothed by his pipe, and by the silence of the place, and by the subdued sunlight that stole through the deep windows of that old library, so quaint with its oak-shelves of calf-bound and red-labelled folios and quartos, its buhl cabinets, and square-backed chairs of the Covenanting days, its half-curtained oriel window, through which were seen the ripe corn or stubble fields that stretched in distance far away to the brown hills of Carrick. Soothed, we say, by all this, Cosmo dawdled over the pages and the diagrams of the famous review at Potsdam for some time before he became conscious that Flora was seated near him, busy with a book of engravings.

Then begging pardon for his pipe and his free-and-easy position, a bachelor habit, as he said, he arose and joined her. Leaning over the back of his chair, as if to overlook the prints, while in reality his admiring eyes wandered alternately and admiringly over her fine glossy hair, the contour of her head, and little white ears (at each of which a rose diamond dangled), and her delicate neck, which rose so nobly from her back and beautifully curved shoulders, he said in a low voice, and with considerable softness of manner, for him at least,—

“’Pon my honour, friend Flora, I believe you really begin to love me, after all.”

“How do you think so, or why?” she asked, looking half round, with her bewitching eyes full of wonder and amusement.

“Because we always quarrel when we meet, and that is called a Scots mode of wooing, isn’t it?”

“So our nurses used to say, long ago.”

“And were they right?”

“Now, dear Cosmo, let us talk of something else, if you please,” she urged pleadingly.

“Why so?”

“A dangerous topic has a strange fascination for you.”

“Dangerous?”

“Unpleasant, at least,” said Flora, pettishly.

Cosmo flung the “Eighteen Manœuvres” of Lieutenant-General Dundas very angrily and ignominiously to the extreme end of the library, and folding his arms stood haughtily erect before Flora, whose bright eyes were fixed on his, with a smiling expression of fear and perplexity combined.

“Can it be possible,” he began, “I ask you, can it be possible, Miss Warrender——”

"Oh, you are about to address me officially—well, sir?"

"Can it be possible, Flora, that you still love this unknown protégé of my foolish mother—this nameless rascal, who has run away, heaven knows where? By-the-bye, I wonder if Spillsby has overhauled the plate chest since he went!"

Flora was silent, but his *brusquerie* and categorical manner offended her, and filled her eyes with tears.

"This weeping is enough," continued the exasperated Cosmo, who, though he had no great regard for Flora, felt his self-esteem—which was not small—most fearfully wounded; "you *do* love him."

"And what if I do?" she asked, very quietly, but withal rather defiantly.

"Very fine, Miss Warrender—very fine, 'pon my soul! That old jade, Anne Radcliffe, with her 'Romance of the Forest,' her 'Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne,' and this new Edinburgh fellow, Scott, with his 'Marmion,' and so forth, have perfected your education. Your teaching has been most creditable!"

"This taunting manner is not so to you," replied Flora, resuming her inspection of the book of prints.

"Oho! we are in a passion again, it seems?"

"Far from it, sir—I never was more cool in my life," said she, looking up with a wicked but glorious smile.

"And where has this runaway gone? His friends in the servants' hall heard something of him last night or this morning, if I may judge from the pot-house row they made."

"He has gone into the army," replied Flora, with a perceptible modulation of voice.

"The army!" replied Cosmo, really surprised; "enlisted—for what?—a fifer or triangle boy?"

"No," replied Flora, curling her pretty nostril, while her eyes gleamed dangerously under their long thick lashes.

"For what, on earth, has he gone then?"

"A gentleman volunteer."

"A valuable acquisition to His Majesty's service!" said Cosmo, laughing, and, greatly to Flora's annoyance, seeming to be really amused; "do you know, friend Flora, what a volunteer is?"

"Not exactly, sir," said Flora, again looking down on her book of prints with a sigh of anger.

"Shall I tell you?"

"If you please."

"We never had any in the Household Brigade—such fellows are usually to be found only with the line corps."

"Ah—with corps that go abroad and really see service—I understand."

"Miss Warrender, the Guards——"

"Well, *what* is a volunteer?" asked Flora, beating the carpet with a very pretty foot.

"A volunteer is a poor devil who is too proud to enlist, and is too friendless to procure a commission; who has all a private's duty to do, and has to carry a musket, pack, and havresack, wherein are his ration-beef, biscuits, and often his blackball and shoebrushes; who mounts guard and salutes *me* when I pass him, and whom I may handcuff and send to the cells or guardhouse when I please; who is not a regular member of the mess and may never be; who gets a shilling per diem with the chance of Chelsea, a wooden leg, or an arm with an iron hook if his limbs are smashed by a round shot; who is neither officer, non-commissioned officer, nor private—neither fish, flesh, nor good red-herring (to use a camp phrase). Oh, Flora, Flora Warrender, can you be such a romantic little goose as to feel an interest in such a fellow as I have described?"

Mingling emotions, indignation at the Master's insulting bitterness, pity for Quentin, and pure anger at the annoyance to which she was subjected, made Flora's white bosom heave as she quietly turned her eyes, with a flashing expression, however, upon the cat-like regards of the sneering questioner, and said,—

"Who are you, sir, that would thus question or dictate to me?"

"Who am I?" he asked, while surveying her through his glass with amusement, perplexity, and something of sorrow in his tone.

"Yes, sir—who are you?"

"I am, I believe, Cosmo, Master of Rohallion, and Colonel to be, of a very fine regiment; so I can afford to smile at the pride and petulance of a moon-struck girl."

"Oh, how unseemly this is! Whatever happens, let us part friends," said she politely, perhaps a little imploringly.

"So be it," said he, kissing her hand as she retired.

"Now, the sooner I am off from this dreary paternal den the better. Away to London at once. Andrews!—Jack Andrews," he shouted, in a tone almost of ferocity; "show me the last newspapers." They were soon brought, and Cosmo's sharp eyes ran rapidly over the advertisements. "Let me see," he pondered, "travelling by mail is intolerable; one never knows who the devil one may be boxed up with for a week, a fever patient or a lunatic, perhaps! The smacks are crowded with all manner of rubbish, travelling bagmen, linesmen going home on leave, sick mothers and squalling babies. What is this? The good ship *Edinburgh*, pinck-built, near the new quay at Leith, sails for

England without convoy—carries six 12-pounders—master to be spoke with daily at the Cross—to be *spoke* with. Faugh! what says the next advertisement? ‘A widow lady, who is to set out for London next week in a post-chaise, would be glad to hear of a companion. Enquire at the *Courant* office, opposite the Old Fishmarket-close, Edinburgh.’ Egad! the very thing—widow lady—hope she’s young and good-looking. I’ll answer *this*!”

Such advertisements in the London and Edinburgh papers were quite common in those days, when travelling expenses were enormous.

He replied to it, and departed from Rohallion in a great hurry soon after. Whether with a fair companion or not, we are unable to say.

We hope so, and that on the journey of about four hundred miles to London, the amenity of the fair widow consoled him for the final rebuff he met with from Flora Warrender.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE MESS.

“He is more fortunate! Yea, he hath finished;
For him there is no longer any future.
His life is bright; bright without spot it was,
And cannot cease to be.

O ’tis well with him,
But who knows what the coming hour,
Veiled in thick darkness, brings for us!—*Wallenstein*.

THE mess-room of the 2nd battalion of the 25th Foot, in old Colchester Barracks, was a long room, and for its size rather low in the ceiling, which was crossed by a massive dormant beam of oak. Good mahogany tables occupied the entire length of the room, with a row of hair-cloth chairs on each side thereof. It was destitute of all ornament save a few framed prints of the popular generals of the time, such as the Duke of York, so justly known as “the soldier’s friend;” Sir Ralph Abercrombie, who fell in Egypt; Sir David Dundas, the hero of Tournay; Sir David Baird, flushed with triumph and revenge, leading on his stormers at Seringapatam; the sad and gentle Sir John Moore, and others.

The room was uncarpeted, but the number of tall wax candles, in silver branches, on the long table, and in girandoles, on the mantelpiece and side board, together with the quantity of rich plate that was displayed, and the brilliance of the assembled com-

pany, about thirty officers in full uniform, their scarlet coats all faced and lapelled to the waist with blue barred with gold, and all their bullion epaulettes glittering, had a very gay appearance; thus the general meagreness of the furniture passed unobserved.

At mess the coats were then worn open, with the crimson silk sash inside and over a white waistcoat. Nearly all the seniors still indulged in powdered heads, while the juniors wore their hair in that curly profusion introduced by George IV., then Prince of Wales. A few who were on duty were distinguished by the pipe-clayed shoulder-belt and gilt gorget, which was slung round the neck by a ribbon which varied in every corps according to the colour of its facings.

Amid much good humour and a little banter, they seated themselves, and the president and vice-president—posts taken by every officer in rotation—proceeded to their tasks of dispensing the viands.

Quentin was seated next his host, Major Middleton, about the centre of the table, and he surveyed the gay scene with surprise and pleasure, though looking somewhat anxiously for the face of his kind friend Warriston, who was to be a guest that evening, but was still detained on duty.

To him much of the conversation was a perfect mystery, being half jocular and half technical, or that which is stigmatized as "shop." It chiefly ran on drills, duties, and mistakes—how badly those 94th fellows marched past yesterday, and so forth; while the standing jokes about Buckle's nag-tailed charger, Monkton's old epaulettes, Pimple's last love affair, and the old commandant's state of mind on discovering that Colville had a fair visitor in his guard-room, seemed to excite as much laughter as if they had all been quite new, and had not been heard there every day for the last six months.

Some rapid changes would seem to have taken place at the headquarters of the 2nd battalion. The old colonel of whom Quentin heard on the march from Ayr, had sold out, and a Major Sir John Glendinning come in by purchase. One Gazette contained a notice of this, and a second announced the death of Sir John in a duel with an officer of the Guards. The lieutenant-colonelcy was thus again vacant, and all present, even Monkton, hoped the step would be given in the regiment, that old Major Middleton would get the command; thus all would have a move upward, and who could say but Quentin Kennedy might obtain the ensigncy which would thus be rendered vacant? But poor Middleton had served so long, and had seen so many promoted over his head, that he ceased to be hopeful of anything.

Some of the youngsters drank wine again and again with our

young volunteer, a spirit of mischief being combined with their hospitality. To "screw a Johnny Raw" was one of the chief practical jokes at a mess-table then, as it is at some few still; but Middleton's influence soon repressed them.

The cloth removed, the regimental mull, a gigantic ram's head, the horns of which were tipped with cairngorms and massive silver settings, was placed before the president, and was passed down the table from left to right, according to the custom of all Scottish messes. The mull was the farewell gift of Lord Rohallion, and the gallant ram was the flower of all that he could procure in Carrick.

The proposed expeditions to Spain and Holland soon formed the staple topics for discourse and surmise; but none present had the slightest idea on which of these the regiment might be despatched.

When Quentin looked round that long and glittering mess-table, and saw so many handsome, pleasant, and jovial fellows, all heedless and full of high spirits, who welcomed him among them, spoke cheerily of his prospects and drank to his success, he felt a pang on reflecting that he must owe it to the death in battle of *one* at least among them!

There was a plenty of laughter, fun, and joking. Many of those present were more or less dandies; but the military Dundreary, the—to use a vulgar phrase—"heavy swell," who affects the style of Charles Mathews in "Used Up," was unknown in the days of the long, long war with France, for men joined the army to become soldiers indeed. Their predecessors were usually killed in action, and they had the immediate prospect of finding themselves before the bravest enemy in the world.

The solemn regimental snob, or yawning yahoo, whose private affairs became so "urgent" in the Crimea; the parvenu Lancer or lisping Hussar, cold, sarcastic, and unimpressible, are entirely the growth of the piping times of peace, and to them the stern advice of the old officer of other times, "Be ever ready with your pistol," is meaningless now.

"I joined the service as a volunteer," said Rowland Askerne, the burly captain of the Grenadiers—as his massive gold rings announced him—turning to Quentin.

"Were you long one?"

"Longer than I quite relished," replied Askerne, laughing.

"Indeed!" said Quentin, anxiously.

"Yes—four years; and long years they seemed to me."

"On foreign service?"

"Of course; and pretty sharp service, too, sometimes. I carried a musket with Middleton's company at the capture of Corsica, in

'95, and again with the Gordon Highlanders on the recent expedition against Porto Ferrajo, in Elba, where I had the ill-luck to be the only man hit. A French tirailleur put a ball through my left leg, but he was shot the next moment by my covering file, Norman Calder, now a sergeant. Some of the Irish in '93 proved better marksmen than the French; they knocked a number of ours on the head, so I won my epaulettes fighting against the poor fellows under General Lake, at Vinegar Hill. I had many a heart-burning before they promoted me (by *they* I mean the Horse Guards); and I swore that when the day came that they did so, I would tread on my sash and turn cobbler; but I had not the heart to quit, so I wear my harness still—a captain only—when I should be a lieutenant-colonel by brevet, at least; but Middleton's case is a harder one than mine, for he has been longer in the service."

"We are most likely bound for North Holland," said the adjutant; "and there many an evil will be ended."

"The French are in great strength there, and hard knocks will be going," added Monkton. "Many among us are fated perhaps to find a last abode among the swamps of Beveland; so, if you escape, Kennedy, you must certainly gain your pair of colours, with five shillings and threepence per diem—less the income-tax—to spend on the luxuries of life—damme!"

"Glad to hear we are to be off so soon, Monkton," said a smart, but somewhat blasé-looking young lieutenant, "for we have a most weary time of it here in Colchester. The course of drill—drill, always drill—with club, sword, or musket, and the whole routine of barrack duty, with inspections and guards, are decidedly a bore!"

"What the deuce would you have, Colville?" asked the adjutant, bluntly. "What did you come here for?"

"I came to be a soldier," replied the "used-up" sub, with a suave smile.

"To be a soldier?"

"Yes—not to doze life away by marching to and fro at the goose-step, in that gravelled yard, or by lolling over the window in shirt-sleeves, to save my shell-jacket. Where are all the castles I built——"

"To storm, eh?" asked Buckle, glancing uneasily at the commanding officer, who was forming his walnut-shells in grand-division squares, for the edification of the second major.

"Yes—I had hoped to have achieved something decidedly brilliant ere this."

"Console yourself, Colville, and pass the port. Ah, you consider yourself sharp—up to every sort of thing—a common delu-

sion with young fellows of your age ; but ten years more soldiering, and the rubs of life between your twenties and thirties, to say nothing of those afterwards, will cure you of thinking so. Believe me, Colville, wherever we go, we shall find plenty of desperate work cut out for us all. Well, Monkton, in recruiting, you could not pick up an heiress—eh ?”

“No. Heiresses are not to be found under every hedge.”

“In Scotland, especially.”

“I have considered the matter maturely, my dear friend,” said Monkton, in his bantering tone, “and have come to the sage conclusion that, if a man marries, with his pay only, he had better hang ; if, otherwise, and his wife have a long purse, and expectations, to enhance the charms of her blushes and orange-buds, let him send in his papers, and quit ; so the service loses your Benedict any way.”

“Purse, or no purse,” said Colville, “as Paragon says in the comedy we acted at York, ‘when you see *my* wife, you shall see perfection, though I never met the woman I could conscientiously throw myself away upon.’”

“Pimple, we hear, has been romantically tender on a flax-spinner’s daughter ; and that the route came only in time to save him from the arms of Venus for those of Bellona, and he is burning now to forget his loved and lost one amid the smoke of battle,” said Colville, with a tragic air. “Ah, there were great men even before old Agamemnon.”

“But Pimple shall show us, by his glorious example, that we have at least one greater since.”

“Let me alone, Colville, and you also, Monkton,” said Boyle, becoming seriously angry ; “I hope to do my duty with the best among you.”

Attention was speedily drawn from the irritation of the little ensign by the entrance of Warriston, who apologized briefly for being late, having been detained on duty at the quarters of his own regiment ; then drawing a chair near his friend Middleton, he handed to him the last number of the *London Gazette*, pointing to a paragraph therein, and leisurely filling his glass with claret, passed the decanters.

When Middleton read the passage referred to, a crimson flush passed over his features, and he crushed up the paper as if an emotion of rage and pain thrilled through him.

“What is the matter, major ?” asked half-a-dozen voices ; “nothing unpleasant, I hope ?”

“The lieutenant-colonelcy has been given *out* of the regiment,” replied Middleton, with his brows knit, while his hand still crushed up the paper ; then, as if remembering himself, he smiled, but very disdainfully.

"He must have seen much service to be appointed over *your* head," said Monkton.

"Service—yes, the Guards fight many bloody battles about Hounslow, Hyde Park, and the Fifteen Acres," replied the justly exasperated field-officer. "Here is my advancement stopped by the promotion of a fellow who has some petticoat interest about Carlton House, whose cousin is groom of the backstairs, and who has been compelled to 'eschew sack and loose company;' so he comes from the Household Brigade to the Line, and may go from the 25th to the devil, perhaps."

"Be wary, my good friend—be wary," said Warriston, glancing round the table hastily.

"And *who* is he?" asked several, full of curiosity.

"The son of a general officer—the Master of Rohallion."

On hearing this name, Quentin felt as if petrified! Here, even here, his evil spirit seemed to be following him!

"It is an old name in the regiment," said Monkton.

"Yes," replied the major; "his father was a gallant officer; I was his subaltern in America; but here it is;" and he read, "'25th Foot; to be Lieutenant-Colonel, Major the Honourable Cosmo Crawford, from the 1st Guards, *vice* Sir John Glendinning, deceased;" so he comes over us, in virtue of that court rank which is one of the worst abuses of our service."

"Promotion is always slow among the Household troops, so they indemnify themselves at the expense of the line," said Warriston, in answer to a question of Quentin's; "every rank among them having a grade above us; but take courage, my good old friend, this kind of thing is not likely to happen again."

With a smile that grew scornful in spite of himself, the worthy old major strove to conceal the bitterness of his heart, though all present condoled with him on his disappointment and hard usage by the powers that be; and for reasons known to himself alone, none shared his chagrin more than Quentin Kennedy.

He had been formally enrolled as a member of the regiment, and had ordered his equipments for it; his name, as a volunteer, had been sent by Middleton to Sir Harry Calvert, the Adjutant-General, at the Horse Guards, that he might obtain the first vacant ensigncy (*subject to the approval of the commanding officer*), and that he might have his passage abroad provided, either by the commissariat department, or by the commandant at Hillsea, near Portsmouth. His own honour, and all the circumstances under which he stood, prevented him from quitting; but *now*, what hope had he of comfort or prosperity in remaining? His very chances of advancement depended on the veto, whim, and caprice of this Master of Rohallion, his bitterest enemy! Of what avail would now be the endurance of campaigning, the

hardship of serving as a volunteer, and risking all the perils of war?

Perhaps Flora Warrender may come with him as his bride, was the next idea; and it added greatly to the bitterness of the others.

That night Quentin slept but little, and he seemed barely to have closed his eyes when he heard the drum beating the assembly.

Then he sprang from bed just as the grey dawn was breaking, and proceeded hastily to dress, remembering to have heard last evening that, at daybreak, the regiment was to have a "punishment parade," which, to his uninitiated ears, had a very unpleasant sound.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE PUNISHMENT PARADE.

"Most worthy sergeant, I have seen thee lead,
Where men among us would be slow to follow;
Udsdaggers, yes! By trench and culverine,
Where men and horses too, lay foully heap'd
On other; and hath it come to this, good sergeant?
Beshrew my heart!—a prisoner and afeared!"—*Old Play.*

PLAIN though it was, being destitute of lace or epaulettes, poor Quentin was very proud of his volunteer uniform, and being eminently a handsome young man, he looked very well in it. The coarse buff crossbelts, the pouch, and bayonet, and, more especially, the Brown Bess he had to carry, did not suit his taste quite so well. He had imagined that he would have to shoulder a kind of Joe Manton, or something like a smart Enfield rifle of the present day, with a "draw" of ten pounds or less on the trigger, instead of a long blunderbuss like the regulation musket of those days, weighing fourteen pounds, with its enormous butt-plate of brass and so forth.

Thanks to the teaching of the old quartermaster, he proved himself so apt a pupil under the sergeant-major and old Norman Calder, that within a week he was reported as "fit for duty," as Monkton said, "doing as much credit to his preceptors as to the cabbage-stalk," for so he designated the army tailor.

But we are anticipating.

His first parade was an inauspicious one, in so far as it was for *punishment*.

A sergeant of the regiment had been recently tried by a regi-

mental court-martial for permitting spirits to be brought by a woman to the main guard-house at night, while he was in command, and by these means certain prisoners became intoxicated and riotous. He alleged that he was asleep on that luxurious couch, the guard-bed, after posting his sentinels, and that the fault lay with his corporal and others; but the plea was urged in vain—the corps was under orders for foreign service—an example was necessary; so he was now to receive the award of his dereliction of duty, and as the drum-major had received some special instructions over night, all knew that it involved the application of the now (happily) almost obsolete instrument—the cat!

The degradation of a non-commissioned officer is always a painful duty; but when flogging is added thereto, it is doubly painful to the witnesses, and maddening to the culprit.

"I told you old Middleton was a Tartar," said Monkton, as he and Quentin hurried downstairs from their quarters; "he'd certainly flog ensigns if he could; and the *Gazette* of last night wont have improved his variable temper. But here he comes, mounted, with holsters and blue saddle-cloth, but looking for all the world like an old woman trotting to market with her butter and eggs. Such a seat—such a queer length, or rather want of length, in the stirrup-leathers! Good morning, Buckle—so we are to have a flogging—ugh? that isn't lively."

Quentin being a young hand, felt somewhat awed, as he knew not what was about to ensue. The sun had not yet risen, and the September morning was chilly and misty; the men of the regiment were falling in by companies under arms in light marching order—the tall grenadiers on the right with their black bear-skin caps; the smart light company on the left with green plumes in their shakos, and Saxon horns on all their appointments; the sergeants were calling the various rolls; the officers were gathered in a somewhat silent group, and the face of every man wore a sullen, or rather dejected expression, for a punishment parade is the kind of parade least liked by soldiers of all ranks. It acts as a damper on the spirits of all; on this morning the atmosphere was dense; the sombre sun seemed to linger behind the uplands of Suffolk, and the shadows to lie deeper in the silent barrack square.

Impressed by the taciturnity and gloomy expression of the men, whose faces wore the pallor incident to all who come from bed in haste at an unusual hour, Quentin remained silent and full of expectation and anxiety as he fell into the rear rank of Captain Askerne's company, to which he was to be permanently attached. He was sensible, however, that the soldiers viewed

him with interest, as a volunteer is always popular. It was to rescue Thomas Grahame, when lying severely wounded, and then serving as a simple volunteer in the red coat of the Caledonian Hunt, that our troops in Holland made one of their most desperate rallies, and gained to the service the future Lord Lynedoch, the hero of Barossa.

The inspection of the companies and the drum for coverers rapidly followed the calling of the muster-rolls; a bugle sounded; the officers fell in; the bayonets were fixed, and the regiment, without music, was marched silently by sections to a secluded part of the barracks, where, surrounded by high stores and magazines, no stranger's eye could oversee the proceedings, and then it was formed in a hollow square, in the centre of which Quentin perceived three sergeants' pikes (weapons not disused till 1830) strapped together by the heads, an equilateral triangle being formed by the shafts, which were stuck in the earth. Near these were the drummers and drum-major, who carried in his hand a canvas bag, which, as Quentin was informed in a whisper by the next file on his right, contained "the cats."

"The officer with the cocked hat, and without a sash, close by, is the doctor," he added.

"The doctor—for what is he required?"

"You'll too soon see that, sir," was the ominous response.

"Steady, rear rank—silence," growled old Sergeant Calder.

At that moment one of the drummers drew forth a cat, and Quentin could perceive that it consisted of nine tails of whipcord, each having nine knots thereon, and these were firmly lashed to a handle about the length of a drum-stick. A slight shudder with an emotion of sickness came over him; and he looked anxiously at the face of Major Middleton, but it seemed immovable as he said to the sergeant-major with studied sternness of tone,

"March in the prisoner."

A section in the face of the square wheeled backward and permitted the unfortunate, with his escort, consisting of a corporal and two men of the barrack-guard, to march in and halt before the major, on which the culprit took off his forage-cap and stood bareheaded, the centre of all observation.

He cast a haggard glance at the triangles; another half furtively and restlessly at the stolid faces round him, and then he seemed to become immovable. There was little need for Mr. Buckle, the adjutant, to read over the proceedings of the Court, for the hopeless sergeant knew at once his double degradation and his doom!

He was to be reduced to the rank and pay of a private, and

to receive *three hundred and fifty lashes*, the utmost number a regimental court could then award; with the option, if he would avoid this extreme punishment, of volunteering to serve for life (*i.e.*, till disabled by wounds or age) in the York Chasseurs, or any other condemned corps, in Africa or the West Indies.

His name was Allan Grange, the colour-sergeant of the Grenadiers, who always considered themselves the *corps d'élite* of a regiment. Altogether he was a model of a man, erect and strong in figure, his hair was a little grizzled about the temples, and his face was somewhat careworn, as if he had known or suffered much anxiety and trouble in his time. His eye was clear and keen, and save a little nervous twitching about the muscles of the mouth, he seemed unmoved and unflinching—unflinching as when on the glorious field of Egmont-op-Zee he commanded the Grenadiers of the 25th, after all their officers had fallen, and with his pike broken in his hand by a musket shot, led them to that bloody hand-to-hand conflict on the road that leads to Haarlem.

Perhaps the poor fellow was thinking of that signal and bloody day—perhaps of his boyhood and his home; it might be of the future, that was all a *blank*; for he seemed as in a dream while the adjutant read over the formula of the trial, the list of charges and the sentence, till he was roused by the drum-major proceeding to rip off with a penknife the three hard-won chevrons from his right arm. It was done gently, but “the iron seemed to enter his soul” at the moment, and a heavy sigh escaped him as his chin sank on his breast.

“Allan Grange,” said Major Middleton, raising his voice clearly and distinctly, that the whole of the hollow square and even its supernumerary ranks might hear, “you are the last man in the whole Borderers whom I could have expected to see standing before us as you do to-day. In cutting off your stripes I feel extreme reluctance and sorrow, and I think you have known me long enough to be aware of that.”

“I am, major—I am aware of it,” said the reduced man in a hollow voice.

“Allan Grange, you have come of a respectable old Scottish stock in Lothian; you were born in my native place, and are one of the many fine lads who came with me to the line from the Buccleugh Fencibles. I know well how, in your native village, the Stenhouse, your name and progress have been watched by early friends and old schoolfellows; by none more than your father, who now lies in Liberton kirkyard, by the good old mother who nursed you; by the old dominie who taught you; by the grey-haired minister who will ere long see your name

affixed, as that of a degraded man, on the kirk-door. I know how, at the village inn on the braehead, in the smithy at the loan-end, at the mill beside the burn, it would be known that Allan Grange had been made a corporal—that he had gained his third stripe—that he had been made a colour-sergeant; and I can imagine how the listeners would drink to your health and to mine, in the hope that we should one day see you an officer; and now—*now*—by one act of folly you are again at the foot of the ladder!”

A heavy sigh escaped the sergeant; the drum-major's knife gave a final rip, and he stood once more a private on parade!

“The worst part of your sentence yet remains—unless—unless you volunteer into the York Chasseurs.”

“Major Middleton,” said Grange, firmly, and standing erect, like a fine man as he was, “I’ll *not* leave the regiment!”

The man was fearfully pale, and it was evident to all that Middleton, though a strict and sometimes severe officer, was greatly moved.

“You will rather take three hundred and fifty lashes than volunteer?” he asked.

“I’d volunteer for a forlorn hope; I’ve done so before now, sir, as you know well, but I’ll not quit the old 25th for a condemned corps. I’ll take my punishment—I’ve earned it like a fool, and with God’s help, I hope to bear it like a man.”

“Then strip, sir,” said Middleton, playing nervously with the blue ribbons of his gorget.

All emotion seemed to pass away as the culprit proceeded deliberately to unclasp his leather stock and unbutton his coat; but before it was off the major exclaimed in a loud voice, as he drew a letter from his pocket—

“*Stop!*”

Grange paused, and looked up with a haggard and bloodshot eye.

“I remit the rest of the sentence, for the sake of one who intercedes for you.”

“Sir?”

“I have had a petition from your wife, and willingly grant it. Take away the triangles. Conduct yourself as you did till this misfortune came upon you, and ere long, Grange, you may regain the stripes you have to-day been deprived of. Rejoin your company.”

“I thank you, sir, for the sake of my poor wife and her bairnie. I have proved that I would rather take my punishment than leave the regiment, and you; and—sir—sir——”

Here Grange fairly broke down and sobbed aloud; and no man

among the nine hundred there thought the less of him, because his stout heart, which even the terror of the lash could not appal, now became full of penitence and gratitude. At that moment many an eye glistened in the ranks, and many a heart was swelling.

"There, there—don't make a fuss," said Middleton, testily: "I hate scenes! Prepare to form quarter-distance column, right in front—stand fast, the Light Company."

And so ended an episode, that, like the warm rising sun now shining cheerfully into the barrack-square, shed a brightness over every face, and lent a lightness—a sense of pleasure and relief to every heart, as the regiment marched back to quarters, and to what was of some importance after being two hours under arms in the morning air—breakfast.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE OLD REGIMENT OF EDINBURGH.

"Such is our love of liberty, our country and our laws,
That like our ancestors of old, we'll stand in freedom's cause;
We'll bravely fight like heroes for our honour and applause,
And defy the French, with all their art, to alter our laws."

The Garb of Old Gaul.

FROM Major Middleton, who took somewhat of a fatherly interest in him, Quentin learned much of the past history and achievements of the regiment he had joined.

It was one with which the stories of his old military friends at Rohallion had made him familiar from boyhood; thus he was in possession of so many old regimental names, so many stock stories and anecdotes, which Middleton deemed unknown beyond the circle of their mess-table and barrack-rooms, that he considered the lad an enigma, and was puzzled how, or where, he had gained all this information about the corps; for Quentin, though looking forward to the arrival of Cosmo with a disgust that almost amounted to terror, kept his own counsel with wonderful prudence, and never permitted the name of Rohallion to escape him.

As there is no official record of the Borderers' achievements prior to 1808, the account given by the major is perhaps the only one extant.

Under David Leslie, Earl of Leven, the 25th Foot were formed on the 10th of March, 1689, from a body of six thousand Covenanters, who, on the news of William of Orange landing at

Torbay, marched from the West Country and laid siege to the castle of Edinburgh. On their banners were an open Bible, with the motto, "For Reformation according to the Word of God."

Marching north against the loyal Highlanders, they left their compatriots, all of whom served without pay or remuneration till the conclusion of the siege, when the fortress was surrendered by the Duke of Gordon after a noble defence, and after being warned by a spectre—pale as he "who drew Priam's curtain at the dead of night"—in fact, by the wraith of the terrible Claverhouse in his buff coat, cuirass, and cavalier wig, all stained with gouts of blood, that he had been shot by a silver bullet on the field of Killycrankie. In one of the rooms of the old fortress this vision is alleged to have appeared to Colin, Earl of Balcarres, then the duke's prisoner, and the truth of the episode is admitted by a delirious biographer of the viscount, who affirms that he is frequently in communion with the ghost in question, and with others.

The Earl of Leven, though colonel of infantry under Frederick Wilhelm, Elector of Brandenburg, and of a regiment which came over with the Prince of Orange, who made him Governor of Edinburgh Castle and Master of the Scottish ordnance, was a Whig noble, chiefly famous for the rapidity of his flight from Killycrankie, and the vigour with which he horse-whipped the Lady Morton Hall. It is said that he rode six miles from the Pass without drawing his bridle, though his regiment, the future 25th, and Hastings, the future 13th, were the only troops that made any stand against the victorious Highlanders.

Leven's regiment having been raised in the capital while Sir John Hall, Knight, was Lord Provost, was designated of Edinburgh, and bore the insignia yet borne on its colours, the triple castle of the city with its crest and motto, *Nisi Dominus Frustra*.

As Leven's regiment—the same in which "my uncle Toby" fought at Landen, and with which he went to "mount guard in the trenches before the gate of St. Nicholas in his roquelaure"—it served in all King William's useless wars for the well-being of his darling Dutch, and all the great barrier towns of Europe have heard the drums of the 25th. It was the *first* British regiment which used the socket in lieu of the screw bayonet which its lieutenant-colonel, Maxwell, adopted in imitation of the bayonets of the French Fusiliers. Prior to this, our bayonets were screwed into the muzzles of the muskets, and to fire with them fixed, was, of course, an impossibility. After fighting at Sheriffmuir, as Viscount Shannon's Foot, it served with distinction in the

wars of the Spanish and Austrian succession, and shared in the disasters of Fontenoy, ere its soldiers had again to imbrue their hands in the blood of their own countrymen at Falkirk, at Cul-loden, and in defending the Comyn's Tower in the old Castle of Blair against Lord George Murray, till we find them again among the troops defeated at Val through the cowardice and incapacity of the Duke of Cumberland.

During the seven years' war it suffered severely at the siege of a small German castle, by the heroism of a sergeant of the enemy. Under Lord Rohallion a party of the Edinburgh Regiment had made themselves masters of an outwork, in which they established themselves at the point of the bayonet. Under this work was a secret mine, which (as the "*École Historique et Morale du Soldat*" relates) was entrusted to a sergeant and a few soldiers of the Royal Piedmontese Guards. The mine was ready, the *saucisson* led through the gallery, the train was laid, and a single spark would blow all below and above to atoms!

With admirable coolness the sergeant desired his comrades to retire, and request the king to take charge of his wife and children. He then, inspired by a spirit of self-devotion, set fire to the train and perished, as the mine exploded. The outwork rose into the air and fell thundering into the fosse, Lord Rohallion, a corporal, and two men alone escaping, covered with bruises and cuts. The name of the sergeant was said to be Amadeus di Savillano, son of the Castellan of the fortress of that name in Piedmont.

The Edinburgh regiment served at the battle of Minden. The Earl of Home was then its colonel, and it was in the second line, and on the left of Kingsley's famous brigade. Landing in England, on the homeward march, near the Borders, the old colours borne in the seven years' war were buried by its soldiers, with all honour, and three volleys were fired over them.

In those days, when any regiment approached London, the colours were furled and cased, and no drum was beaten or fife blown during the march through its limits. The 3rd, or Old East Kentish Buffs, were alone excepted, and had the exclusive privilege of marching through the City of London with all the honours of war, in memory of having, at some period, been recruited from the City Trained Bands.

Likewise no regiment could beat a drum within the walls, or through the portes of the Scottish capital, with the exception of the 25th, or old Edinburgh Regiment. But not long after the battle of Minden, it chanced that a certain thick-pated lord-provost objected to their drums beating up for recruits, on the plea that none should beat there but those of the City Guard.

On this, the colonel, Lord George Henry Lennox (M.P. for the county of Sussex, who died in 1805), was so incensed, that on his special application the title of the corps was changed, and its facings were altered from the royal yellow of Scotland to the royal blue of Britain, and after a time it was styled the "King's Own Borderers."

Egmont-op-Zee, Martinique, and Egypt added fresh honours to those of other times; but still on drum and standard are borne unchanged the castle, triple-towered, with the anchor and motto, *Nisi Dominus Frustra*, usually the first little bit of latinity learned by the Edinburgh schoolboy.

Such is a rapid outline of the past history of this famous old corps, in the ranks of which Quentin Kennedy hoped to achieve for himself a position and a name—perhaps, rank and glory too! What boy does not look forward to some such vague but brilliant future,—

"In life's morning march when the bosom is young."

The evening subsequent to the punishment parade was the last on which the battalion mess would assemble, and Quentin was Monkton's guest. He was again seated near the worthy major, and from him he learned much of what we have just narrated, many a quaint regimental story being woven up with what was actual military history.

"You should tell him of that startling adventure, or rather, I should say, of those series of adventures, which happened to you when commanding an out-picquet in America," said Colville, with a significant but hasty glance at Monkton, for the frequent repetition of this story formed a kind of covert joke against the worthy major.

"What—which out-picquet—at the siege of Fort St. John?"

"Exactly, Major," said Monkton.

"St. John, on the Richelieu River?" asked Quentin.

"Yes," said Middleton, with an air of gratification; "you are a very intelligent young man, and have no doubt read of the defence of that place."

Quentin hastened to say that he *had* heard of it; in fact, the defence with all its details—the bravery of Majors Preston and André of the Cameronians, and so forth—formed one of the stock stories of his old friends, the quartermaster and Jack Andrews; and so frequently had he heard it, that he was somewhat uncertain at times that he had not served there too.

"But the episode of yours, with that devilish Indian fellow, may scare Kennedy when on sentry," said the adjutant, "a duty he must do as a volunteer."

"Scare—not at all!" said Middleton, testily; "it is the very

thing to sharpen his wits and to keep him wide awake. There are others here who never heard the story, and it is worth listening to; but before I begin we must send away the marines and replenish the decanters."

"Right!" cried Askerne, who was president; "this is the last night of one of the jolliest messes in His Majesty's service. To-morrow the plate, which has glittered before us so long—the crystal from which we have imbibed the full-bodied port, the creamy claret, and the choice Madeira, the sparkling champagne, the old hock, in fact, 'the entire plant,' to use a commercial phrase, will be packed up and stored away among dust and cobwebs, while the Borderers march in quest of 'fresh fields and pastures new.' A long farewell to our glorious mess!" exclaimed the handsome grenadier, as he poured a glass of port down his capacious throat. "Mr. Vice-President, order the last cooper of port before the major begins his story."

"Ah, the mess!" sighed Buckle, the adjutant; "when we come to be frying our ration beef in a camp-kettle lid, under a shower of rain, perhaps, there will be an exchange with a devil of a difference!"

With the aforesaid "cooper" there came in hot whisky-toddy for the major and a few select seniors, for it was *then* the custom at the messes of Scots and Irish national corps to introduce the Farintosh and potheen; though I fear our dandies of the Victorian age (especially such as are horrified at the sight of a black bottle) might consider such a proceeding a deplorable solecism in good taste.

"And now, major, for your story," said Askerne, while Colville, perhaps the only affected man in the regiment, gave his shoulders a shrug, perceptible only by the glittering of his epanettes, and Monkton responded by a sly wink behind his glass of wine, while he pretended to be looking for the beeswing.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE ADVANCED PICQUET.

"All quiet along the Potomac, they say,
 Except now and then a stray picquet
 Is shot as he walks on his beat to and fro,
 By a rifleman hid in the thicket.
 'Tis nothing. A private or two now and then,
 Will not count in the tale of the battle;
 Not an officer lost—only one of the men,
 Breathing out all alone the death-rattle."

"IN the spring of the year '75, a party of ours, under Lord Rohallion, then a captain, was sent to the Fort of St. John, on

the Richelieu River, to strengthen the garrison, which was composed of some companies of the 7th Fusiliers and the 26th, or Cameronians, under Major Preston, of Valleyfield, in Fifeshire, as gallant a fellow as ever bore the King's commission.

"We were in daily expectation of the advance of the rebel General Montgomery, with a great force, so the duties of guards and sentinels were performed with great vigilance, as the whole country for miles around, if not actually in possession of the armed colonists, was full of people who were favourable to their cause, and were consequently inimical to the king and to us.

"Montgomery was expected to approach through Vermont county (now one of the states) by the eastern shore of Lake Champlain, a long and narrow sheet of deep water, which forms the boundary between it and the State of New York; thus, came an eminence which commanded a considerable view of the country southward, and at the distance of two miles from Fort St. John, Major Preston, of the 26th, had an outpost or picquet, consisting of one officer and twenty men, stationed in a log-hut, from whence they were relieved every week. The officer in command of this advanced party had to throw forward a line of sentinels, extending across the road by which the Americans were expected to approach. At the hut was also a small piece of cannon, taken from a gunboat recently destroyed on the Lake, a 6-pounder, which was to be fired as a signal for the troops in Fort St. John to get under arms, and the picquet was well supplied with rockets to give the alarm by night.

"Our sentinels there had frequently been found dead and scalped, without a shot being fired. Sometimes they disappeared altogether, without leaving a trace, save a few spots of blood on the prairie grass. Their desertion was never suspected by those in authority; but that savages and assassins lurked in woods along the eastern and western shores of Lake Champlain we had not a doubt; thus the solitary outpost before the Fort of St. John was a duty disliked by all, and always undertaken with sensations of doubt and anxiety.

"It was on a beautiful afternoon in the month of September, that with a sergeant and twenty men of the Borderers, I took possession of this log hut, relieving a Lieutenant Despard, of the Fusiliers, from whom I received over my orders, and posted my line of six sentinels at intervals across the highway and a kind of open prairie which it traversed. These orders were written and delivered with the parole and countersign, by Major André, of the Cameronians (afterwards named 'the unfortunate'), and they were simply, that during the night the sentinels were to face all persons approaching their posts, to stand firm in a

state of preparation at half-cock with ported arms, and to fire instantly on all who could not give the countersign.

"Despard informed me that excessive vigilance was necessary, as he had lost five sentinels in one week, information which made my fellows look somewhat blankly in each other's faces; 'and these assassinations have occurred,' he added, 'though we have an Indian scout, Le Vipre Noir, an invaluable fellow, however unpleasant his name may sound, attached to the picquet-house. I would advise you to keep off that bit of prairie in front, Middleton. Zounds! one is always over the ankles in mud there, and mid-leg deep occasionally; so it's more like snipe-shooting in an Irish bog, than knocking over Yankees and Iroquois.'

"I now found that there was another scout, a Cornishman, named old Abe Treherne, attached to the post, as well as the native mentioned by Despard.

"Abe Treherne was a white-haired squatter and pioneer, who, for more than forty years, had been in the district, living by the use of his rifle and hatchet. He wore an Indian hunting-shirt and deer-skin mocassins, and had so completely forgotten the civilization of his native England, that he had almost become an Indian by habit, if not by speech. He was brave, however, and a most faithful fellow to us. Active and hardy, brown and weatherbeaten by constant exposure; privation could not impair, nor toil weary his strength, which was wonderful, for, by the wild life of nature he had led, every muscle had been developed, till it became like a band of iron.

"The savage scout, Le Vipre Noir, as he was named, was one of the Lenni-Lenappe—or unmixed race as they boast themselves—who once occupied all the vast tract of country which lies between Penobscot and the shores of the Potomac; but we styled the most of them Delawares, and by that name they became known.

"Well, this devil of a Delaware—I think I can see the fellow now!—was a model of muscular strength and manly beauty, so far as form and sinew go. He was like a colossal statue of polished copper. His usual expression was fierce and sullen; his eyes were keen, black, and glittering, and his red and yellow streaks of war-paint lent a fiendish aspect to his dusky visage, the features of which were otherwise clean cut and regular. He was somewhat of a dandy in his own way, as his fur mocassins and hunting-shirt were gaily ornamented with scarlet cloth, wampum, and beads, by the Delaware girls.

"His head had been denuded of hair entirely, save the scalp-lock, in which two feathers were stuck. At his girdle hung his

pipe and hunting-pouch, a large musk-rat skin, in the tail of which his keen-edged scalping-knife was sheathed; he had also a pouch for ammunition, a long rifle, and a tomahawk, which were never from his side by night or day.

"This Delaware was from one of the native villages about the upper end of the Penobscot river, where the chiefs had signed a treaty of alliance, offensive and defensive, with our government, and had sworn to have no communication with the Americans or others, the king's enemies, without the knowledge of the officer commanding the British forces in North America.

"One of our men, named Jack Andrews, had quarrelled with the Delaware, about a wild goose they had shot. Blows were exchanged; the savage drew his scalping-knife; but the Borderer clubbed his musket, and laid the red-skin sprawling among the reeds. Peace was enforced between them; but the savage was more than ever sullen and reserved, doubtless brooding on the vengeance he meant to take.

"Such was *Le Vipre Noir*, who will bear rather a conspicuous part in my little story.

"It was a lovely evening, I have said, when we took possession of the sequestered picquet-house. The rays of the setting sun, as he sank beyond those grand and lofty mountain ranges, which rise between the source of the Hudson and Lake Champlain, shed a red glow across the water, and bathed in warm light the foliage of the mighty primeval forest, which for ages had clothed the shores of that magnificent lake. In the immediate foreground the bayonets of my sentinels seemed tipped with fire, as they trod slowly to and fro upon their posts in that voiceless solitude. Before the log-but the arms were piled, and my soldiers, with the Cornishman, were cooking their supper, while the swarthy Indian scout was squatted on his hams at a little distance, smoking listlessly or half asleep, as the duty of searching in the woods usually devolved upon him after nightfall.

"I, too, lit my pipe, and the pouch from which I took my tobacco called back to mind some half-forgotten thoughts and fancies.

"They were lovely hands that embroidered that pouch for me, and it was associated with many a promenade in Paul Street, when we were quartered in Montreal, with balls at *her* father's house, in the Rue de Notre Dame, flirtation and ices in the Place d'Armes, where the French troops used to parade of old—for, in short, that tobacco-pouch had been made for me by Ella Carleton, the belle of that old colonial city.

"She had a dash of the old French blood in her, and hence her dark hair and eyes, which contrasted so wonderfully with her

pure English skin, and hence her continental form of eyelid and drooping lash. So I sighed as I thought of a year ago—cursed the emergencies of the service that banished me to Fort St. John, and passed my fair Ella's present to the sergeant of the picquet, that he might supply himself, for active service is a true leveller, and without impairing discipline leads to a spirit of *camaraderie* not to be found in such tented fields as Hyde Park or the Phoenix at Dublin.

"After the sun set and twilight stole on, I walked restlessly to and fro before the log-hut, within which my men were now gathered with their arms, as the dew was falling. I had seen all carefully loaded and had examined the flints and priming. I was resolved that due vigilance on my part should not be wanting if the post were attacked or my sentinels surprised; and to prevent them from wandering unconsciously from their beat in the dark, I had six white stakes placed in the ground, and gave orders that they were to remain close by them during the night, until relieved, and every hour I went in person with the reliefs, a most harassing duty.

"Leaving my sergeant at the picquet-house, a few minutes before midnight, I went with six men to relieve my sentinels, who were all posted on the skirts of an open space, a large tract of waste ground which for some miles was covered with long prairie grass, and which stretched away towards the forest that was traversed by the main road leading to Fort Edward on the Hudson, about sixty miles distant.

"Save the gurgle of a rummel that stole under the prairie grass there was no sound in the air—not even the whistle of the cat-bird; there was no moon, but the stars were clear and bright, and guided by their light we went straight from post to post, relieving the sentinels; but as we approached the place where the sixth should have been, on the extreme left of the highway, we advanced *unchallenged* to the stake that marked his beat: the place was solitary and the man—was gone.

"His musket, undischarged, was lying there, and a pool of blood beside it at once refuted any suspicion of desertion. But how came it that he had perished without resistance—without giving an alarm, and where was his body? All round the place we searched for it, but did so in vain.

"Posting another man, I gave him reiterated orders and injunctions to be on the alert, and wistfully the poor fellow looked after us as we returned to the picquet-house with the tidings of another mystery, which added to the consternation that prevailed concerning this devilish outpost. Neither le Vipre Noir nor Treherne had yet returned; they were as usual scouting in front

of our advanced sentinels, and when they came back, not together, but separately, they each reported the country all quiet for miles towards the mountains. Who then was this determined assassin, unless it were Satan himself?

"Next night the sentinel on the extreme right was missing, without leaving even a trace of blood, and without the grass being bruised or trodden near his beat; and on the night following, the sentinel on the roadway was found lying dead on his face; his musket was undischarged, his head cloven behind, and his scalp gone.

"The consternation of my picquet had now reached its height. Still our scouts asserted the country to be quiet around us, though, with a strange gleam in his eyes, the Indian said, that when he shouted in the woods he heard an echo.

"From whence?" I asked, suspiciously.

"From the great barrows by the lake—where the bones of my forefathers lie. The white man treads there now; but they were great warriors, and many were the scalps that dried before their tents."

"I was but a young officer then, being fresh from our Scottish Fencibles, otherwise I would have doubled my sentinels; but the idea never occurred to me, and my sergeant failed to suggest it. The affair was becoming intolerable. This mysterious assassination of brave men roused my blood to fever heat, and I resolved that on the next night I should take the duty of sentinel with a firelock, and remain on my post as such, not for one hour merely, but for the entire night, in the hope of solving this terrible enigma.

"On the evening I came to this conclusion the post was visited by Charley Halket from the fort, the captain of our first company, who came cantering up on a fine bay horse. I was glad to see him, for Halket was one of the most lively and devil-may-care fellows in the corps, and he sang the best song and was the best stroke at billiards in our whole brigade. Charley would drink his two bottles at mess overnight and wing a fellow in the morning, without keeping his arm in a cold bath, and with an accuracy that showed he had a constitution of iron; he hunted fearlessly, shot fairly, rode like a mad-cap; gambled, but simply for excitement, and spent his money like a good-hearted fellow. He was always laughing and jovial, and I was about to relate the disasters that had befallen my party, when the pale and anxious expression of his usually merry face arrested me, and I feared that the fort had been taken by surprise in rear of our post.

"What the devil is the matter, Halket?" said I. "I have always predicted to Preston that we should never have our legs

under his mahogany at Valleyfield again—never taste his Fife-shire mutton, or test his fine old Burgundy. What is up? Has the fort fallen, Charley, that you come here with your bay thoroughbred covered with foam, even to its bang-up tail?

“No, my dear Middleton; but I wish to pass your post.”

“To the front?” I asked, with astonishment.

“Yes.”

“It is impossible!”

“Even if out of uniform?”

“In or out of uniform, none can pass or repass save our scouts, whose lives are of little value. Preston’s orders are strict and decisive.”

“But if in disguise?” he urged, earnestly, and lowering his tone, as he stooped from his saddle.

“Worse and worse!”

“How? explain, pray,” he demanded, as his earnestness became tinged with irritation.

“You might be deemed a deserter by General Burgoyne if found more than two miles from camp or quarters.”

“A deserter!—I?—pooh, man, absurd!”

“A general officer has joined the rebels already. Then you might be hanged as a spy by Montgomery, whose troops are certainly closing up, if we may judge from the murderous outrages committed by his Indian allies upon the picquet stationed here.”

“It is for that very reason, Middleton, that I am most anxious to ride southward for about twelve miles into the country, along the shore of the lake, towards Misiskoui.”

“You could not return; my sentinels have positive orders to fire instantly on all——”

“Who have not the parole and countersign,” said he, smiling; “they are *Quebec* and *WOLFE*. You see that I have both!”

“From whom?”

“My friend André, of the Cameronians—the fort-major.”

“He is very rash! I wish he had this infernal picquet to command; the duty might teach him a caution.”

“But, my dear Middleton——”

“Say no more, Charley—come, don’t be rash; duty is duty and I must perform mine. Moreover, I value your life and my own honour too much to risk either to further some mad-cap ramble of yours.”

“Zounds, sir!” he began, furiously.

“Now don’t call me out, Charley; I am on duty and can’t go, and when I am relieved and you are cool, you won’t ask me. But tell me, Charley, what affair is this that seems so urgent?”

The country in front is full of perils; already eight or nine sentinels have been assassinated, and yonder grave covers one of three fine fellows I have lost.'

"Listen to me, Jack," said he, dismounting, and throwing the reins of his horse over his arm, and leading me a little way apart from the soldiers who were smoking and lounging before the log-hut; 'you remember Ella Carleton?'

"I should rather think I *do*," said I, reddening, and giving him a very knowing wink, to which he made not the slightest response; 'Ella, whom we used to meet so much a year ago at Montreal.'

"The same," said he.

"I remember her perfectly—a charming girl, with features that were pale but beautifully regular, and with eyes and hair so dark.'

"Exactly," said Halket, whose eyes sparkled with pleasure. Her father, you are aware, is a rich land-owner, in the American interest.'

"Many a bottle of champagne I have drunk in his house in the Rue de Notre Dame!'

"Yet he is an old curmudgeon who hates us red-coats, and for that reason, as well as for a few others that were more cogent, Ella and I were privately married about a year ago.'

"Married?—whew! Here's news for the mess to discuss over their wine and walnuts!" I exclaimed, while laughing to conceal an irrepressible emotion of pique.

"I depend on your honour," said he, earnestly.

"To the death, Charley; but you have quite taken my breath away. Married—you never looked a bit like it!"

"We were married a year ago at the cathedral in the Place d'Armes unknown to all—even to yourself, Rohallion, and others my most intimate friends," said Halket, speaking rapidly and with growing emotion; 'in a month she will be a mother—think of that, Jack! She is residing at one of her father's country clearings near the Missiskoui River, in an old hunting-lodge, built by Simon de Champlain, who first discovered the lake. She has written to me by a circuitous route, saying that Montgomery's advanced posts are within a few miles; that her father and all his men are with the rebels; that the Iroquois are ravaging the country, burning, killing, and scalping all before them; and thus, for the love I bear her, and for the sake of our child that is yet unborn, I must strive to save her, and have her conveyed to Fort St. John. This is all my story, Middleton. She is about twelve miles distant from this outpost; I think I know the way, and am certain I should be back before the

morning-gun is fired. If not, I must risk all—commission, rank, reputation, everything—but Ella must be saved! You understand me now, don't you, my dear friend?" said he, earnestly, as he grasped my hand, and I could see that the poor fellow's eyes were filled with tears.

"Perfectly, Charley; I would risk my life to save or serve her or you; but I think we may find those who will do both more effectually than either you or I."

"Who do you mean?"

"The Delaware scout, and old Abe Treherne, the hunter, will get over the ground in half the time, and knowing, as they do, every track and trail in the forest, with ten degrees more safety than you could ever hope for."

"I at once proposed the affair to them, and Treherne entered into it with great readiness. His reward was to be a pair of handsome pistols and ten guineas. He knew the old hunting-lodge on Carleton's clearing quite well, and with the assistance of the horse, undertook to bring the lady to the picquet-house in safety, and long before sunrise. The Delaware, however, shook his head.

"Le Vipre Noir had some darned doubts, I guess," said the hunter; 'the woods about the Missiskoui are full of the mocassin prints of the Yankees and the Iroquois; the tracks, I reckon, are dangerous enough; and there will be an almighty trouble in bringing a fine lady a-horse-back through the bush; for all that, Delaware, you'll venture to bring the White Chief his squaw safe from the hunting-place beyond the river?'

"From the Missiskoui, where once I had a wigwam, and where my squaw and her little papooses perished at the hands of the white men?" said the savage, in a husky and guttural voice, while his stealthy eyes filled with a malevolent gleam, as he sat sullenly smoking under a tree.

"You're a darned fool, Vipre," said Treherne, angrily. 'Look ye har—what's the use o' thinking o' that now? What's past is past, ain't it?'

"She appealed to them, and they laughed at her. She appealed to Manitto, but his face was hidden behind a cloud, and he saw neither her nor what the pale-faces did to her. She is with Manitto now—but I yet am here."

"We may have a scrimmage, Delaware—can you bite yet?" asked Treherne, testily.

"The savage pointed to his scalping-knife and grinned.

"Will you venture with me for twelve bottles of the raal Jamaiky fire-water?"

"Oui, ja, yes!" said the savage, eagerly, in his mixed jargon;

'I neither fear the feathered arrows of the rebel Iroquois, or the lead bullets of the Yankees. Go! Le Vipre Noir is a warrior!'

"'Delaware,' said I, patting his muscular shoulder, 'what are the greatest of human virtues?'

"'Courage and contempt of death,' he replied loftily, while shaking the two heron's plumes in his scalp lock.

"'Good,' said Halkett, who had listened to all this preamble with irrepressible anxiety and impatience; here are ten guineas as an earnest of future reward, Delaware. You will risk this for me?'

"'For *you*?' said the Indian, scornfully, putting the coins, however, in the musk-rat pouch, which dangled at his wampum girdle.

"'For her, then?' said Halket, persuasively.

"'For neither,' replied the Delaware, while a lurid gleam shone in his sombre eyes.

"'How, fellow?' asked Charley, with alarm.

"'I do so for the reward—for the fire-water and gold that will buy me powder and blankets; but neither for the squaw nor the papoose of the pale-face.'

"'Risk it for what you will, but only serve me; and you, Treherne—'

"'Make your terms with this darned crittur of a Redskin, and you can settle with me after, sir,' said Treherne, who had been regarding his compatriot with a somewhat doubtful expression. 'Come, Vipre Noir, we must keep the hair on our heads, if we can certainly; so put fresh priming into the pan of your rifle, my dark serpent, for the dew is falling heavily; if the rebel Redskins come on us, it must be our scalp agin theirs! I'm your brother—let us be off to the bush ere the sun sets.'

"Charley Halkett hastily wrote a note to his wife, telling her to place implicit confidence in the two scouts as true and tried men, who would convey her safely to the British outpost in front of Fort St. John, where he, all eagerness and impatience, awaited her; and on being furnished with this, Treherne slung his long rifle across his body, stuck a short black pipe in his moustachioed mouth, mounted Halkett's horse, and, with the swift-footed and agile Indian running by his side, crossed the open bit of prairie before the log-hut, and rapidly disappeared in the dense and virgin forest that lay beyond.

"That forest soon grew dark; twilight stole along the shores of the silent lake; the last red rays of lingering light faded upward from the lone mountain tops; one by one the bright stars came twinkling out, and the old and clamorous anxiety occurred to us all; and each poor fellow, as he was left on his post, felt

himself a doomed man, who might die without seeing his destroyer or who might disappear as others had so mysteriously done, without leaving a trace behind.

"Slowly and wearily our autumn night wore on, and with our pistols cocked, Halkett and I visited the sentinels almost half-hourly. The sky was moonless, and the silence around our lonely post was oppressive; to the listening ear there came no sounds save those of insect life among the long and reedy prairie grass.

"All at once, afar in distance, from the deep recesses of the vast pine forest, there rose the shrill war-whoop of the red man!

"Like the yell of an unchained fiend, it rung upon the still night air; but died away, and all became silent—more silent apparently than before, and I felt the hand of Halkett clutch my arm like a vice, while hot bead-drops rolled over his temples.

"I had terrible forebodings, but remained silent, and with reiterated advice to my sentinels to be 'on the alert,' returned to the picquet-house. Poor Charley Halkett's alarm excited all my compassion; the boldest, frankest, and jolliest fellow in the corps had become a nervous, crushed, and miserable wretch!

"I thought that lingering night would never pass away. It passed, however, as others do; the morning came in, bright and sunny, and without one of our sentinels being missed or molested; and it seemed, certainly, a very singular feature in those mysterious deaths, that the only night on which no fatality occurred, should be that on which we actually had an *alerte*, and when Treherne and the Delaware were away in the direction of Missiskoui, and *not* scouting in front of the post!

"Morning had come, but there was yet no appearance of our messengers or Ella Carleton, and old sympathies made me doubly anxious on her account.

"Halkett, who was pale with sleeplessness and intense anxiety, walked with me a little way beyond our advanced sentinels, who were now shouting to each other their happy congratulations that nothing had occurred during the night—in short, that they were *all* there.

"Lake Champlain, in its calm loveliness, shone brightly under the morning sun, its surface unruffled by the wind, and not a sail or boat was visible in all the blue extent of its far-stretching vista. The gorgeous azalias were still in their bloom, so were the snowy blossoms of the sumach, and the glorious yellow light fell in flakes between the towering pines of the ancient forest, while the dewy prairie grass glittered as it rippled beneath the pleasant breeze.

"The distant landscape and the dim blue hills that look down on the winding Hudson seemed calm and tranquil, the silence

around us was intense, the hum of a little waterfall alone breaking the stillness of the autumn morning.

"Poor Charley was like a madman, and it was in vain that I suggested to him that Treherne and the Delaware might have been compelled to make a long detour; that Ella might be ill and unable to travel on horseback, that her father might have returned, that Montgomery's advanced guard might be now far beyond the Missiskoui, that our scouts might have lost their way in going or in returning, not that I believed either possible for a moment, but I was glad to say anything that would serve to account for their delay, or soothe his gnawing anxiety; so in exceeding misery he returned to Fort St. John. The moment that morning parade was over he hastened to me again, and slowly the terrible day passed over, without tidings of Ella Carleton or her guides, and as night drew near I had almost to use force to prevent Halkett from setting out on foot for the old hunting-lodge on the Missiskoui, a place he could never have reached alone.

"Suddenly we were roused, about sunset, by a shout from the picquet, and as we looked up, the Delaware stood before us—alone!

"His aspect was fierce but weary; his hunting shirt was torn and bore traces of blood. His story was brief. They had been attacked by Indians in a deep gulley some miles distant, in the grey dawn of the morning; Treherne had been killed and the lady carried off. The Indian showed his wounds, and then claimed his reward.

"Poor Halkett, on hearing of this catastrophe, fell as if struck by a ball, and was laid on the hard bed of planks whereon the soldiers slept. He was in a delirium, yet passive and weak as a child.

"So the hostile Indians were in our neighbourhood! I thought with horror of what the poor girl—on the eve of becoming a mother—might suffer at their merciless hands; and all her delicate beauty, her merry laugh, the singular combination of elegance and *espièglerie* in her manner, came vividly back to memory, as I had seen her last, happy, radiant, and smiling, amid the glare and glitter of a garrison ball in the city of Montreal.

"I questioned the Delaware closely; but his story was simple and unvarying, so he received food, rum, and the reward which Halkett had promised.

"An irrepressible anxiety stole over me as night deepened, so taking my servant's musket and bayonet, I primed, loaded, and fixed a new flint with care; and proceeding to the distance of fifty yards in front of my line of sentinels, on the open space where the prairie grass grew thick and rank, I resolved to pass some hours there as an advanced sentinel.

"The sky was dark and cloudy, the stars were obscured by vapour, the silence was intense, and it smote upon my heart with a sense that was in some degree appalling, though I knew that my sentinels and the rest of the picquet were all within hail. The tall prairie grass waved solemnly and noiselessly to and fro; the sombre forest beyond, with the myriad cones of its black pines, stretched far away to the distant mountains, but not a sound came from thence, nor from the lone shores of the vast lake of Champlain, whose vista receded away for miles upon my right. Even if the night-herons were wading among its waters I could not hear them, and the whistle of the cat-bird was silent.

"Through the dark, I could see where the wild sumach, with its white blossoms and scarlet berries, waved over the graves of those who had perished on this fatal out-post. Their aspect was solemnizing in such a dark and silent hour, and the familiar faces of the dead men seemed to hover before me. But there was something mysterious and unaccountable in the total disappearance of those whose blood we had only traced upon the grass of prairie.

"Around where I stood this grass was more than a yard in height and thick as ripened corn. It was waving steadily to and fro as the breath of the night wind agitated it.

"I had been in that solitary place about two hours, and midnight was at hand, when an emotion like a thrill—a tremor, not of fear, but of *warning*—a 'grue,' as we Scots call it, came over me. I felt the approach of some unseen thing, and cast a hurried glance around me. Something unusual about the appearance of the prairie-grass caught my eye.

"Where, when hitherto I had looked in a direct line to the front, the surface, while swaying to and fro, seemed a flat and unbroken mass, there was now visible a dark line, a hollow furrow, as if some animal was crawling slowly and stealthily through it.

"With every nerve braced, with all the powers of vision concentrated, I watched this new appearance, and the hollow track seemed to draw nearer and nearer to me, slowly, silently, and almost imperceptibly, as if a snake or some such reptile were crawling towards my post; and, ere long, it was not more than fifteen yards distant.

"I placed a handkerchief over the lock of my musket to muffle the click of the lock in cocking, then I took a steady aim and fired!

"On this, 'piercing the night's dull ear,' there rang a wild, shrill and savage cry—a cry like that we had heard on the preceding

night—and a dark figure, bounding from among the grass, came rushing towards me, but I stood, with bayonet charged, ready to receive him on its point.

“He was an Indian, brandishing a tomahawk; but, within a few feet of where I stood, he fell prone on his face, wallowing in blood. The report of my musket, and his cry, brought all the picquet to the front. We dragged him into the log-hut, and discovered that I had shot our missing scout, the Delaware, Le Vipre Noir, the ball having entered his left shoulder, and traversed nearly the entire length of his body. He was mortally wounded, but the powers of life were strong within him. I was greatly concerned by this misfortune, which might procure us the enmity of his entire tribe; but why was he stealing upon our post in the manner he had done?”

“Before this could be resolved, and while we were staunching the welling blood, and doing all in our humble power to soothe the suffering and prolong existence, a pale and bloody figure, who had given our sentries the pass-word, staggered into the hut, and sunk, half fainting, against the guard-bed. He was old Abe Treherne, the scout, cut, gashed, and apparently dying.

“He was almost as speechless as the Delaware; but, on seeing each other, though weak and deplorable their condition, the eyes of these men glared with rage and hate, and they made such incredible efforts to reach each other, knife in hand, that the soldiers of my picquet had to hold them asunder by force.

“‘Search the hunting-pouch of the darned thief—the accursed red-skin!’ said Treherne, in a hollow voice. ‘May I never hew hickory again if I don’t have his scalp and his heart tew!’

“I was about to make the search, when Charley Halkett anticipated me, and shudderingly drew forth its cold and clammy contents.

“There were four human scalps; three were recognised as belonging our to own men, the murdered sentinels, and the fourth had attached to it the long, black silky hair of a woman—the soft and ripply tresses of Ella Carleton!

“‘The red-skin fell on us suddenly in the bush, with knife and tomahawk,’ said Treherne, speaking with difficulty, and at intervals; ‘he took me unawares from behind, and well nigh clove my head—darned if I don’t think the tommy’s stickin’ there yet! I fought hard for my precious life—harder for the poor lady, I guess; but I swowned, after a time, and then he dragged her into the bush.’

“‘Ella—Ella!’ exclaimed Halkett, wringing his hands.

“‘The last I saw,’ twen the leaves and the blood that poured into my eyes, was the glitter of his scalping-knife; and the last

heard was her death-cry. Shoot the varmint, captain! I searched the bush for her till I was weary. Shoot the critter dead, soldiers! Ah! he was well named Le Vipre Noir, by that son of a Delaware dog, his father.'

"The savage scarcely heard the end of this, for Halkett, maddened by the contents of the hunting-pouch, and brief story of Treherne, placed a foot upon the prostrate body of the Delaware, then, slowly and deliberately, while his teeth were set, his eyes flashing fire, his brows knit by rage and grief, and, while an unuttered malediction hovered on his lips, he passed his sword-blade twice through the heart of the scout. The latter, for a moment, writhed upward on the steel, like a dying serpent, and then expired.

"Poor Abe Treherne died soon after, for his wounds were mortal.

"So our false Delaware proved, after all, to have been in the American interest, and inspired by some real or imaginary wrongs, to have been the assassin of our sentinels.*

"Fort St. John soon after fell into the hands of the Yankees under General Montgomery; we were all made prisoners of war, and my poor friend, Charley Halkett, died, and (far from his kindred, who lie in the Abbey Kirk of Culross) we buried him amid the snow as we were being marched, under escort, up the lakes, towards Ticonderago."

Such was the major's story of *the advanced picquet*.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

COSMO JOINS.

"Ye'll try the world soon, my lad,
 And Andrew, dear, believe me,
 Ye'll find mankind an unco squad,
 And muckle may they grieve ye.
 For care and trouble set your thought,
 Even when your end's attained;
 And a' your views may come to nought,
 When every nerve is strained."—*Burns*.

AFTER a careful search through some of the old dog-eared Army Lists, which, with Burns's poems, Brown's "Self-interpreting Bible," and Abercrombie's "Martial Achievements of the Scots Nation," formed the chief literary stores in his snuggerly, the old

* Several sentinels of an outpost were thus actually assassinated during the American war. A Scottish periodical of the time gives a Highland regiment—the 74th, I think—the credit of furnishing the victims.

quartermaster discovered that in the 94th, the famous old Scots brigade, there was a Captain Richard Warriston. He was the only one of that name in the service, and doubtless the same officer whom Quentin mentioned in his letter as having so kindly befriended him; and by Lord Rohallion's direction, Girvan at once addressed a letter to the officer commanding the regiment for some information regarding the runaway.

In due time an answer came from Colonel James Campbell, to state "that no volunteer named Quentin Kennedy had attached himself to the 94th Regiment;" thus the household of the old castle were sorely perplexed what to do, and had to trust to time or to Quentin himself for clearing up the mystery that overhung his actions.

In little more than ten days after Cosmo's name had appeared in the War Office *Gazette*, Quentin received the unwelcome information that the new lieutenant-colonel, his enemy, had arrived at head-quarters, and that a parade in full marching order was to take place on the morrow, when he would formally take over the command of the corps from poor Major Middleton.

Though daily expected, these tidings fell like a knell upon Quentin's heart, and the old sickly emotion that came over him, when Warriston brought the fatal *Gazette* to the mess-room, returned again in all its force.

"I think this Guardsman will prove a thorough Tartar," said Captain Askerne, in whose rooms Quentin first heard Cosmo's arrival canvassed; "and I fear that he wont make himself popular among the Borderers."

"From what do you infer that?" said some one.

"He refused to let the drums beat the 'Point of War' this morning."

"The devil he did!" said Colville.

"That looks ill, damme!" added Monkton.

"I do not understand," said Quentin, as if looking for information.

"It is," said Askerne, "a custom as old as the days of Queen Anne—older, perhaps, for aught that I know—for the drums and fifes of a corps to assemble before the quarters of every officer who is newly appointed to it, and there to honour the king's commission by beating the 'Point of War.' Though dying out now, and frequently 'more honoured in the breach than the observance,' it is a good old custom, peculiar to many of our Scottish regiments. The officer then gives to the drummers a few crowns or guineas, as the case may be, to drink his health; but the Master of Rohallion bluntly and haughtily told the drum-major that he 'would have no such d—d nonsense, and to dismiss!'"

"The deuce! this augurs ill," said Colville, with his affected lisp, as he arranged his hair in Askerne's little camp mirror.

"Perhaps his exchequer is in a bad way."

"Not improbable, Monkton," said Askerne; "he was one of the most lavish fellows in the household brigade, and he played and betted deeply; but there goes the drum for parade; in a few minutes we shall see what like our new man is."

We shall not afflict the reader with details of this most formal parade, during which the regiment marched past Cosmo in slow and quick time in open column of companies; then followed an inspection of the men, their clothing, arms, accoutrements, and everything, from the regimental colours to the pioneers' hand-saws; but thanks to old Middleton's unwearying zeal and pride in the Borderers, the somewhat fractious lieutenant-colonel discovered nothing to find fault with.

Mounted on a fine dark charger, with gold-laced saddlecloth and holsters, Cosmo, in his new regimentals, looked every inch a handsome and stately soldier; and his appearance, together with his clear, full, mellow voice, when commanding, impressed the corps favourably. Quentin, from the rear rank of Askerne's company, surveyed him earnestly, anxiously, and with secret misgivings; for every feature of his cold, keen, and aristocratic face brought back vividly the mortifying and unpleasant passages in which they had both borne a part at Rohallion, and sadly and bitterly he felt that the *worst* was yet to come.

The parade over, the regiment was dismissed, but the orderly bugle summoned the officers to the front, where they gathered around Cosmo, who had dismounted and haughtily tossed his reins to an orderly (Allan Grange, the crest-fallen and reduced sergeant), his gentleman's gentleman—that town-bred appendage who had excited alternately the wrath and contempt of sturdy old Jack Andrews, had resigned, having no fancy for the chances of war as a camp-follower; so the Master had to content himself with such unfashionable "helps" as soldiers and bätmen.

Quentin, lingering irresolutely, and half hoping to escape observation, was about to retire to his quarters, when Askerne called to him, with a friendly smile—

"Kennedy, come to the front; Middleton is about to introduce the officers, and you must not be omitted."

Poor Quentin felt that his doom had come, and he could feel, too, that as his heart sank, the blood left his cheeks. But honest anger and just indignation came to the rescue, and gave him courage.

"Why should I dread this man—why shrink from one I have never wronged?" he asked of himself. "Of what am I afraid? The sooner this introduction is over, and that I know on what

terms we are to be, the better. Perhaps he may be desirous of forgetting the past, of committing to oblivion all that has occurred, and may be the first to hold out a friendly hand. Heaven grant it may be so!"

But this suggestion of his own generous heart was little likely to be realized.

With studied politeness and grace, if not with pure cordiality, Cosmo received each officer as he was presented according to his rank, until the junior ensign, Boyle, was introduced.

"Ah!" said Cosmo, detecting one present *without* epaulettes, "you have a volunteer with you, I see."

"One," said Middleton, "whom I wish especially to introduce to your notice and future care, colonel, as a most promising young soldier, who in a few weeks has passed through all his drills, and is now fit for any duty. Mr. Quentin Kennedy—Colonel Crawford."

The nervous start given by Cosmo, the changing colour of his cheek, the shrinking and dilation of his cat-like eyes, as he raised and almost nervously let fall his eye-glass, were apparent to several; and Quentin saw the whole. Cosmo bowed with marked coldness, and turned so sharply on his heel, that his spurs rasped on the gravel of the barrack-yard.

"Major Middleton," said he, haughtily, before retiring, "tell that young man, Mr.—what's his name——?"

"Mr. Kennedy, sir."

"That when speaking to an officer, he should bring his musket to the *recover*."

And so ended this—to Quentin—most crushing interview.

"What the devil is up now?" said Monkton to Colville; "it is evident that our new bashaw doesn't like gentlemen volunteers."

"Then he is devilishly unjust—that's all," said Askerne, the Grenadier, who had begun his military life as a volunteer.

Quentin could have furnished the clue to all this; but to speak of the friendless childhood which cast him among the household at Rohallion, and, more than all, to speak of Flora Warrender, and to make her name the jest of the heedless or unfeeling, were thoughts that could not be endured. He was silent, and his tongue seemed as if cleaving to the roof of his mouth, while wearily and sadly he turned away to seek the solitude of his bare and scantily-furnished little room.

Middleton, who had followed unobserved, entered after him, and just when Quentin, to relieve his overcharged heart, was on the point of giving way to a paroxysm of rage, even to tears, the worthy old field officer caught his hand kindly, and said with earnestness—

"Don't be cast down, my boy, by what has occurred to-day. He was cold and haughty to every one of us, but it is evidently his way, and may wear off after a time. I hope so, for our Borderers won't stand it. Take courage, lad—take courage, and don't fret about it; Jack Middleton will always be your friend, though a hostile commanding officer is a dangerous rock ahead."

"Oh, major, you are indeed kind and good," said Quentin, as he seated himself at the hard wood table, and covered his burning face with his trembling hands; "but you know not all I have suffered—all I think, and feel, and fear!"

"Chut, Kennedy, look up! 'The English pluck that storms a breach or heads a charge is the very same quality that sustains a man on the long dark road of adverse fortune,' says an author—I forget who—not he of the 'Eighteen Manœuvres,' however; so, Quentin, don't let Scottish pluck be behind it. To follow the drum is your true road in life, boy, and who but God can tell when that road may end?"

"Major Middleton," said Quentin, bitterly, "the colonel's chilling manner, and *more* than you can ever know, have crushed the heart within me. I never knew my father—of my mother I have barely a memory," he continued in a broken voice—"a memory, a dream! Fate has made me early a victim—a plaything—a toy! Advise me—I feel my condition so desolate, so friendless again. What future can there be for me, if I continue to serve under him; and how can I hope for happiness, for justice, or advancement under such as he?"

"Obey and suffer in silence; bear and forbear, and you will be sure to triumph in the end. 'He that tholes overcomes,' says our Scottish proverb, and the poor soldier has much to *thole* indeed; but do your duty diligently, and you may defy any man—even the king himself."

Quentin strove to take courage from the good major's words, and ultimately did so; but Middleton knew not the past of those he spoke of, and was ignorant of the secret rivalry and settled hatred that existed between them, especially in the heart of Cosmo; while Quentin, in his ignorance of military matters, knew not that the Master, if he chose to exert his powers arbitrarily, might dismiss him from the corps at once, unquestioned by any authority for doing so; and that by the stigma thus attached to his name, the chance of any other commanding officer accepting him as a volunteer would be utterly precluded; and that Cosmo did *not* do so was, perhaps, only by a lingering emotion of justice or of shame for what his family, and chiefly Flora Warrender and that huge bugbear "the world," would say if the story got abroad.

"Better trust to the *chances* of war," thought Cosmo, grimly, as he lay sullenly at length, smoking, on a luxurious fauteuil in his ample quarters, which were furnished with all the comforts and elegance with which a Jew broker could surround him; "a brat, a boy, a chick—a d—ned foundling! With all my conscious superiority of rank, birth, and, what are better, strength of mind and character, why do I dread this Quentin Kennedy? Why and how does he seem to be so inextricably woven up with me, my fate and fortune—it may be, with the house of Rohallion itself? Last of all, why the devil do I find him here?" (This question he almost shouted aloud as he kicked away the cushion of the fauteuil.) "Why do I dread him? *Dread*—I—shame! what delusion is this—what depression is it that his presence—the very idea that his existence—and contact bring upon me? In all this there is some strange fate—I know not what; but I shall trust to the chances of war for a riddance, and to the perilous work I shall cut out for *him* in particular."

And so he trusted; but with what success we shall see ere long.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE DEPARTURE.

"Our native land—our native vale—
 A long and last adieu;
 Farewell to bonnie Teviotdale,
 And Cheviot mountains blue!
 The battle-mound, the border-tower,
 That Scotia's annals tell;
 The martyr's grave—the lover's bower—
 To each, to all—farewell."—*Pringle*.

Cosmo studiously and ungenerously omitted the slightest mention of Quentin's name or existence in the letters which he wrote home to Carrick, well knowing that if he did so the kind old general, his father, would at once address the authorities at the Horse Guards on the subject of the young volunteer's advancement: and he knew that if appointed to any other corps than the Borderers, Quentin would be beyond his influence, and free from the wiles and perils in which he had mentally proposed to involve his future career.

At last came the day so long looked forward to by all the regiment—the day of its departure for foreign service, as it proved, in the Spanish Peninsula, the land to which, after several

useless and bloody expeditions to Holland, Flanders, Sweden, and Italy, the thoughts and hopes and all the sympathies of Britain turned with the desire of driving out the victorious French, and restoring the Bourbon dynasty—almost an old story now, so remote have the struggles before Sebastopol and the wars of India made the great battles of those days seem to be.

The regiment had been under orders, and in a state of readiness for weeks; but until, for it and for others, the *route* came in the sabretasche of an orderly dragoon who rode spurring in "hot haste" to Colchester Barracks, its members knew not for what country they were destined.

The drums beat the *générale*, the signal for marching, early in the morning of a soft September day, and the four pipers of the regiment played loud and high a piobroch, that rang wildly, in all its various parts, through the calm air, waking every echo of the old barrack square; for the piobroch, we may inform the uninitiated, is a regular piece of music, containing several portions; beginning with an alarm, after which follow the muster, the march, the fury of the charge, the shrill triumph of victory and the low sad wail for the slain.

With the battalion of the Borderers, there were to march on this morning another of the Gordon Highlanders—the 92nd—one of the most noble of our national corps, together with a strong detachment of the 94th, under Captain Warriston, so the enthusiasm of all was at its height when, in heavy marching order, with great coats rolled on the knapsacks, blankets folded behind them, havresacks and wooden canteens slung, the companies fell in, and there seemed to be a rivalry between the kilted pipers of the 92nd and the Borderers as to who should excel most, or (as Cosmo, who was not inspired by overmuch nationality, said to Middleton) who should "make the most infernal noise."

Silent and grim, and keeping somewhat haughtily aloof from all his officers, Cosmo sat on his black horse, gnawing the chin-strap of his shako, as if controlling some secret irritation, while watching the formation of the corps, looking very much the while as if longing to find fault with some one.

"And so we are destined to reinforce the army under Sir John Moore?" said Quentin, for lack of something more important to remark.

"Yes," said Askerne, as he adjusted the cheek-scales of his tall grenadier cap; "Sir John is a glorious fellow, and quite the man of to-day."

"I would rather be the man of *to-morrow*," said Monkton.

with an air that implied a joke, though there was something prophetic in the wish.

"I knew Moore when he was serving as a subaltern with the 82nd in America—he is a brave, good fellow, and a countryman of our own, too," said Middleton, whose orderly brought forward his horse at that moment; "and now," he added, putting his foot in the stirrup, "a long good-bye to the land of roast-beef, and to poor old Scotland, too! I wonder who among us here will see her heather hills and grassy glens again—God bless them all!" And reverentially the fine old man raised his hand to his cap as he spoke.

A crowd formed by the soldiers' wives and children of the regiment, now gathered round him, for the old major knew all their names and little necessities, and was adored by them all. Now he was distributing among them money, advice, and letters of recommendation to parish ministers and others, and to none was he more kind than to the weeping wife of Allan Grange, who, by his reduction to the ranks, lost nearly every chance of accompanying the troops abroad.

To the screaming of the bagpipes had now succeeded the wailing of women, for many soldiers' wives and children were to be left behind, and to be transferred to their several parishes in Scotland; many to remote glens that are desolate wildernesses now; and it was touching to see these poor creatures, looking so pale and miserable in the cold grey light of the early morning, each with her wondering little brood clinging to her skirts, as she hovered about the company to which her husband belonged, his quivering lip and glistening eye alone revealing the heart that ached beneath the coarse red coat, amid the monotony of calling rolls and inspecting arms.

On one of the waggons which was piled high with baggage, huge chests of spare arms, iron-bound trunks, camp-beds and folded tents, Quentin tossed the little portmanteau which contained his entire worldly possessions; then the baggage-guard, looking so serviceable and warlike with their havresacks and canteens slung crosswise, came with bayonets fixed, and the great wains rumbled away through the echoing, and as yet empty streets of Colchester.

None of the officers were married men, fortunately for themselves perhaps, at such a juncture. The colours were brought forth with their black oilskin cases on; the advanced guard marched off, and just as the sun began to gild the church vanes and chimney-tops, and while reiterated cheers rang from the thousands of soldiers who crowded the barrack windows, and whose turn would come anon, the troops moved off, the brass

bands of other regiments—the usual courtesy—playing them out, the whole being under the command of the senior officer present, Lieutenant-Colonel Napier of Blackstone, who afterwards fell at the head of the 92nd Highlanders on the field of Corunna.

In the excitement of the scene, Quentin felt all its influences, and marched happily on. He forgot his affronts, his piques and jealousies, and as the young blood coursed lightly through his veins, he felt that he could forgive even Cosmo, were it only for Lady Winifred's sake, when he saw him riding with so stately and soldier-like an air between Major Middleton and Buckle the adjutant, at the end of the column, where the splendid grenadiers with their black bearskin caps and braided wings, made a martial show such as no company of the line could do in the shorn uniform of the present day.

All the happy impulses of youth made Quentin's spirit buoyant; thus his light heart beat responsive to the crash of the drums and cymbals, and to every note of the brass band. Thus, when on looking to the rear, he saw so many hundred bayonets and clear barrels (they were not browned in those days) flashing in the sun, with the long array of plumed Highlanders that wound through the streets after his own regiment, he forgot, we say, his grievances, and the cold and haughty Master—we believe he forgot even Flora Warrender—he forgot all but that he was a soldier—one of the old 25th, and bound for the seat of war! Ah, there is something glorious in these emotions—this flushing up of the spirit in a young and generous breast; but alas! the time comes when we look back to the long-past days with envy, regret, and, it may be—wonder!

The sorrowful parting, the hurried embraces, the last kisses, the sad and lingering glances of farewell being exchanged along the line of march every moment, by husbands and wives, by parents and children, as group after group gradually dropped to the rear of the column they could but follow with their eye; and hearts, ceased after a time to impress him by their very number and frequency; thus he soon laughed with the gay, and enjoyed all the silly banter of the heedless, as the officers began to group by twos and threes, after Colchester was left behind, and the troops were permitted to "march at ease" along the dusty highway between the meadows and ploughed fields.

"I have never seen so jolly a morning as this," said Ensign Boyle, as he trudged along with the regimental colour crossed on his left shoulder; "never since first I saw my own name in print!"

"How in print?" asked Quentin, with simplicity; "you do not mean on the title-page of a book?"

"Not at all—nothing so stupid—I mean in the Army List——"

"Where you have never been tired of contemplating it since—eh, Pimple?" asked Monkton; "but I hope you have left your flirting jacket and best epaulettes with the heavy baggage—you only need your fighting traps now."

"I say, Pimple," said Colyear, the senior ensign, who, of course, had the King's colour, "how much of the ready had that flax-spinner's daughter, about whom Monkton quizzes you so much?"

"Rumour said twenty thousand pounds."

"The devil! You might have done worse—aw—eh!"

"We're all doing worse, damme, marching for embarkation on this fine sunny morning," said Monkton. "There goes the band again to the old air; but, save you, Pimple, few among us leave 'girls behind us' with twenty thousand pounds."

"Adieu to Colchester, its morning drills and monotonous guards, and that devilish incessant patter of little drum-boys practising their da-da, ma-ma, on the drum from sunrise till sunset," said Colville, looking back to where the strong old Saxon castle and the brick steeple of St. Peter were being shrouded in yellow morning haze exhaled by the sun from the river Colne.

"*Bon voyage!*" cried a gay staff-officer, lifting his plumed cocked hat, as he cantered gaily past; "good-bye, gentlemen."

"Adieu, Conyers," replied Monkton; "can I do anything for you?"

"Where?"

"Among the ladies in Lisbon?"

The officer made no reply, but rode hurriedly on.

"That is the fellow who had to quit Wellesley's staff for eloping with some hidalgo's wife, the night after Vimiera," said Askerne. "Monkton, you hit him hard there."

"Don't you think old Jack Middleton looks dull this morning?" asked some one.

"The colonel is in a devil of a temper, I think," replied Askerne.

"Perhaps he has left his love behind him," suggested Boyle, raising his stupid white eyebrows sentimentally; "don't you think so, Kennedy?"

"Pimple, allow me to rebuke you," said Monkton, with an air of mock severity. "An ensign may wear a faded rose next his beating heart; but in a field-officer, such an insane proceeding is not to be thought of."

While this empty talk was in progress, about eight miles from Colchester, a troop of the Scots Greys approached, en route for

that place; and, as they drew near, the drums and fifes of the Borderers struck up a lively national quick step; the Greys brandished their swords, and gave a hearty cheer on coming abreast of the colours of each regiment, and loud were the hurrahs which responded.

This little episode, and the thoughtless banter which preceded it, had raised Quentin's spirits to a high state of effervescence. Fresh hope had come with all her ruddiest tints to brighten the future and blot out the past, and with all the glorious confidence of youth, he was again building castles in the air on this morning march, when the sun that shone so joyously on the green English landscape, added to the brilliance of his thoughts and enhanced his joy and happiness.

From his day-dreams, however, he was roughly awakened by the harsh voice of the Master of Rohallion, who half reined in his horse, and turning round with his right hand planted on the crupper, said with great sternness:

"Captain Askerne, I must remind you that, though officers may converse together when the men are marching at ease, such a privilege can by no means be accorded to a mere volunteer. Mr. Kennedy, rejoin your section, and keep your place, sir!"

Askerne's dark and handsome face coloured up to the rim of his bearskin cap, and his eyes sparkled with rage at the colonel's petulant wantonness; while poor Quentin, who, lost in his bright day-dreamings, had certainly, but unconsciously, diverged a few paces from the line of march to converse with his friends, fell sadly back into the ranks, and felt that the dark cloud was enveloping him again.

CHAPTER XXXV.

ON THE SEA.

"A varied scene the changeful vision showed,
For where the ocean mingled with the cloud,
A gallant navy stemmed the billows broad.
Blent with the silver cross to Scotland dear,
From mast and stern St. George's symbol flow'd,
Mottling the sea their landward barges row'd,
And flashed the sun on bayonet, brand, and spear,
And the wild beach returned the seaman's jovial cheer."
Vision of Don Roderick.

THE kingdom of Spain was at this time the great centre of European political interest. France, Prussia, and Russia had scarcely sheathed their swords at Tilsit, when the terrible conspiracy of Fer

dinand, the Prince of the Asturias, against his father, Charles IV.—a plot imputed to Michael Godoy, who, from a simple cavalier of the Royal Guard, had, by the queen's too partial favour, obtained the blasphemous title of the Prince of Peace—afforded the Emperor Napoleon, whose creature he was, a pretext for interfering in the affairs of the Spanish Bourbons. He decoyed the royal family to Bayonne, compelled their renunciation of the crown and kingdom of Spain, into which he poured at once his vast armies, and, after the fashion of the cat in the fable, who absorbed the whole matter in dispute by the monkeys, he solved the problem by seizing the Spanish empire, and gifting it to his brother Joseph, formerly King of Naples.

Portugal, at this juncture, deserted by her government and by her pitiful king, who fled to Rio de Janeiro, in Brazil, fell easily into the power of a French army, under Marshal Junot, who was thereupon created Duke of Abrantes, a town on the Portuguese frontier.

All Europe cried aloud at these lawless proceedings, and the Spaniards, so long our enemies, with our old allies the Portuguese, were alike filled with fury and resentment. The peasantry flew to arms, and the provinces became filled with bands of guerillas, brave but reckless; so the whole peninsula was full of tumult, treason, bloodshed, and crime.

"England," says General Napier, "both at home and abroad was, in 1808, scorned as a military power, when she possessed (without a frontier to swallow up large armies in expensive fortresses) at least *two hundred thousand* of the best equipped and best disciplined soldiers in the universe, together with an immense recruiting establishment through the medium of the militia."

War, *not* "Peace at any price," was the generous John Bull's motto, and, to aid these patriots, a British army proceeded to the peninsula in June, 1808, under the command of Lieutenant-General Sir Arthur Wellesley. Some sharp fighting ensued along the coast, the prologue to the long and bloody, but glorious drama, that was only to terminate on the plains of Waterloo.

On the 21st of August we fought and won the battle of Vimiera, and nine days after followed the convention of Cintra, by which the French troops were compelled to evacuate the ancient Lusitania, and were conveyed home in British ships; but still the marshals of the empire, with vast armies, the heroes of Jena, Austerlitz, and a hundred other battles so glorious to France, were covering all the provinces of Spain, from the steeps of the Pyrenees to the arid plains of Estremadura.

"Soldiers, I have need of you," says the Emperor, in one of

his bulletins. "The hideous presence of the leopard contaminates the peninsula of Spain and Portugal. In terror he must fly before you! Let us bear our triumphal eagles to the Pillars of Hercules, for there also we have injuries to avenge! Soldiers, you have surpassed the renown of modern armies, but have you yet equalled the glory of those Romans, who, in one and the same campaign, were victorious upon the Rhine and the Euphrates, in Illyria and upon the Tagus? A long peace and lasting prosperity shall be the reward of your labours."

The standard of freedom was first raised among the Asturians, the hardy descendants of the ancient Goths, and in Galicia; then Don José Palafox, by his valiant defence of the crumbling walls of Zaragossa, showed the Spaniards what brave men might do when fighting for their hearths and homes.

"In a few days," said Napoleon, boastfully, in the October of 1808, "I go to put myself at the head of my armies, and with the aid of God, to crown the King of Spain in Madrid, and plant my eagles on the towers of Lisbon."

The Junta of the Asturias craved the assistance of Britain, even while the shattered wrecks of Trafalgar lay rotting on the sandy coast of Andalusia. Three years had committed those days of strife to oblivion, or nearly so, and arms, ammunition, clothing, and money were freely given to the patriots, while all the Spanish prisoners were sent home. Then, Sir John Moore, who commanded the British forces in Portugal, a small but determined "handful," was ordered to advance into Spain against the vast forces of the Duke of Dalmatia; which brings us now to the exact period of our humble story, from which we have no intention of diverging again into the history of Europe.

The body of troops among which our hero formed a unit, sailed in transports from Spithead, and in the Channel, and when Portland lights were twinkling out upon the weather-beam, poor Quentin endured for the first time the horrors of sea-sickness, and lay for hours half-stifled in a close dark berth, unheeded and forgotten, overpowered by the odour of tar, paint, and bilge, and by a thirst which he had not the means of quenching, for he was helpless, unable to move, and longed only for death.

It was no spacious, airy, and gigantic *Himalaya*, no magnificent screw-propeller like the *Urgent*, the *Perseverance*, or any other of our noble steam transports, that on this occasion received the head-quarters of the "King's Own Borderers," but a clumsy old and leaky tub, bluff-bowed and pinck-built, with her top-masts stayed forward, and her bowsprit tilted up at an angle of 45 degrees, and having a jack-staff rigged thereon. She was a black-painted bark of some four hundred tons, with the figures

"200 T."—(signifying Transport No. 200)—of giant size appearing on her headrails. Between floors or decks hastily constructed for the purpose, the poor soldiers were stowed in darkness, discomfort, and filth. The officers were little better off in the cabin, and hourly their servants scrambled, quarrelled, and swore in the cooks' galley, about their several masters' rank and seniority in the order of boiling kettles and arranging frying-pans, while the hissing spray swept over them every time the old tub staggered under her fore course, and shipped a sea instead of riding buoyantly over it.

In the mighty stride taken by civilization of late years, when steam and electricity alike conduce to the annihilation of time and space, the soldiers of the Victorian age know little of what their fathers in the service underwent, when old George III. was King. In stench, uncleanness, and lack of comfort and accommodation, our shipping were then unchanged from those which landed Orange William's Dutchmen at Torbay, or which conveyed our luckless troops in after years to the storming of the Havannah or the bombardment of Bocca Chica.

After Quentin had recovered his strength (got his "sea-legs" as the sailors have it) he presented his pale, wan face on deck one morning, when the whole fleet, with the convoy, a stately 74-gun ship, were scattered, with drenched canvas, like sea-birds with dripping wings, as they scudded before a heavy gale, through the dark grey waters of the Bay of Biscay, the waves of which were rolling in foam, under a cold and cheerless October sky.

On that comfortless voyage to the seat of war, many were the secret heart-burnings he felt; many were the cutting slights put upon him by his cold and hostile commanding officer, who went the tyrannical length of even raising doubts as to whether he should mess in the cabin or among the soldiers; but, to Cosmo's ill-concealed rage and confusion, the motion was carried unanimously and emphatically in the poor lad's favour; that the cabin was his place, as a candidate for his Majesty's commission.

Cosmo gave a smile somewhat singular in expression, and unfathomable in meaning, when Major Middleton communicated to him the decision of the officers; but though victorious in this instance, young as he was, the new affront sank deep in Quentin's heart, and he felt that there was "a shadow on his path" there could be no avoiding now.

So rapidly had events succeeded each other since that evening on which the Master had so savagely struck him down in the avenue, that Quentin frequently wondered whether his past or his present life were a dream. His last meeting with Flora Warrender among the old and shady sycamores—Flora so

loving, so tender, and true!—his last farewell of old John Girvan (but one of whose guineas remained unchanged); that horrid episode of the dead gipsy, when he sought shelter in the ruined vault of Kilhenzie; the drive in the carrier's waggon; his volunteering at Ayr; the march to Edinburgh, with the voyage to England in the armed smack, and his subsequent military life, all appeared but a long dream, in which events succeeded each other with pantomimic rapidity; and it was difficult to believe that only months and *not* years must have elapsed since the kind and fatherly quartermaster closed the gate of Rohallion Castle behind him. And now he was sailing far away upon the open sea, bound for Spain—a soldier going to meet the victorious veterans of Napoleon, in England alike the bugbear of the politician and the truant school-boy; and he was in the 25th too—that corps of which, from childhood, he had heard so much, and under the orders, it might be said truly at the mercy, of his personal enemy and bad angel, the cold, proud Master of Rohallion!

He found it difficult indeed to realize the whole and disentangle fact from fancy—reality from imagination; but that the faces of Monkton, Boyle, and the good Captain Warriston, when he saw him occasionally, were as links in the chain of events, and gave them coherency.

At times, especially after dreams of home (for such he could not but consider Rohallion), there came keen longings in his heart to see Flora once again and hear her voice, which often came plainly, sweetly, and distinctly to his ear in sleep. Of her, alas! he had not one single memento; not a ring, a miniature, a ribbon, a glove—not even a lock of her soft hair—the hair that had swept his face on that delightful day when he carried her through the Kelpie's pool in the Girvan, and which he had kissed and caressed, in many a delicious hour spent with her in the yew labyrinth of the old garden, by the antique arch that spanned the Lollards' Linn, under the venerable sycamores that cast their shadows on the haunted gate, or where the honey bee hummed on the heather braes that sloped so sweetly in the evening sunshine towards the blue Firth of Clyde.

From soft day-dreams of those past hours of happiness he was roused on the evening of the 3rd October by the boom of a heavy gun from the convoy, and several signals soon fluttered amid the smoke that curled upward through her lofty rigging. They were to the effect that *land was in sight*—the fleet of transports to close in upon the convoy—the swift sailers to take the dull in tow; and now from the grey Atlantic rose a greyer streak, which gradually became broken and violet-coloured in the

sheen of the sun that was setting in the western waves, as the hills of Portuguese Estremadura came gradually into form and tint, on the lee-bow of the transport.

Next morning, when day broke, he found the whole fleet at anchor in Maciera Bay, and all the hurry and bustle on board of immediate preparations to land the troops on the open and sandy beach, where, when the tide meets the river, a dangerous surf rolls at times, and from thence they were, without delay, to march to the front.

It was a glorious day, though in the last month of autumn. The ruddy sun of Lusitania was shining gaily on the hills and valley of Maciera, and on the plain beyond, where already the grass was growing green above the graves of our soldiers, who fell three months before at the battle of Vimiera. But little recked the new-comers of that, as the boats of the fleet covered all the bay, whose surface was churned into foam by hundreds of oars, while clouds of shakos and Highland bonnets were waved in the air, and swords and bayonets were brandished in the sunshine, as with loud hurrahs, that were repeated from the ships, and re-echoed by the rocks and indentations of the shore, the soldiers of the Borderers and the 92nd anticipated a share in the laurels that had been won at Rolica and Vimiera—hopes many were destined never to realize; for like the thousands who, elsewhere, were marching under Moore and others, towards Castile and Leon, full of youth and health, joy and spirit, many were doomed but to suffer and die, unhonoured and unurned.

Portugal, as we have stated, having been rescued from the grasp of the French by the treaty of Cintra, and Sir John Moore having been ordered to advance into Spain, notification came that a fresh force from Britain, under the orders of Sir David Baird, would land at Corunna, to co-operate with him. Thus the troops on board the little fleet in Maciera Bay were ordered at once to cross the Tagus, traverse Portugal, and join him on the frontiers—a march of more than one hundred and twenty miles, in a land where the art of road-making had died out with the Romans.

At this time the British forces in the Peninsula numbered forty-eight thousand three hundred and forty-one, bayonets and sabres.

On the 15th of the next month the French in Spain, commanded by the Emperor in person, made a grand total of three hundred and thirty-five thousand two hundred and twenty-three men, with upwards of sixty thousand horses; yet, with hearts that knew no fear, our soldiers marched to begin that struggle so perilous and unequal, but so glorious in the end!

CHAPTER XXXVI.

PORTALEGRE.

"You ask what's campaigning? As out the truth must,
'Tis a round of complaining, vexation, disgust,
Night marches and day, in pursuit of our foes,
Up hill or down dale, without prog or dry clothes;
And to add to our pleasure in every shape,
The French give us doses of round shot and grape."

Military Panorama, vol. ii.

ON the evening of the 11th of October, the armed guerillas who hovered on the wooded mountains which look down on the rough old winding Roman highway that leads from the dilapidated citadel of Crato to Portalegre, saw the glitter of arms in the yellow sunshine, the flashing of polished barrels and bright bayonets, and the waving of uncased colours, amid the clouds of rolling dust that betoken the march of troops; and ere long, the same picturesque gentry, in their mantles, sombreros, and sheep-skin zamarras, might have heard the martial rattle of the British drum, and the shrill notes of the fife, together with the wilder strain of the Scottish bagpipe, echoing between the green and fertile ranges of the sierra that there forms the northern boundary of Alentejo, and the sides of which are clothed in many places by groves of olive, laurel and orange trees; but from the latter the golden fruit had long since been gathered, ere it was quite ripe, to save it alike from the marauding soldiery of friend and foe.

Covered with the dust of a march of twenty miles from the rustic village of Gaviao, they were our old friends of the 25th, the Highlanders, and Warriston's detachment, that were now approaching the head-quarters of the division to which they were to be attached.

On this route from the Bay of Maciera, Quentin had undergone all the misery of a soldier's life during the wet season in Portugal, where the towns were then in ruins and desolate, the country utterly destroyed, and where every one who was not in arms seemed to have fled towards the coast, for, like the breath of a destroying angel, the armies of France had passed over the entire length of the land from Algarve to Galicia, laying all desolate in that wicked spirit of waste which has been so peculiar to the French soldier in all ages.

Each day, in lieu of the old Scottish *réveille* welcoming the morning, Quentin had heard the sharp note of the warning bugle, or of the drummer beating hastily the *générale*, through the

ruined streets of Santarem, of Abrantes or elsewhere; through the equally silent lines of tents when they encamped on the mountains, or the miserable bivouac when they halted in some wild place where whilom maize or Indian corn grew, summoning the drowsy and weary soldiers to their ranks for the monotonous march of another day.

From the bare boards, the hard tiled floor, or perhaps the cold ground, whereon our volunteer had slept with his knapsack for a pillow, he had been roused by the voices of the sergeant-major, or Buckle the adjutant, shouting in the grey morning, "Fall in, 25th—stand to your arms—turn out the whole!" while the rain that swept in sheet-like torrents along the desolate streets, and the gale that tore in angry gusts among the ruined gables and shattered windows, formed no pleasant prelude to a day's march that was to be begun without other breakfast, perhaps, than a ration biscuit soaked in the half-stale fluid that filled his wooden canteen.

In camp, the tents were made to hold twelve soldiers each; but some of these were always on duty. All lay with their feet to the pole and their heads to the wall or curtain. Each man's pack was his pillow, and each slept, if he could, with a blanket half under and half over him. The rain always sputtered and filtered through in their faces, till the drenched canvas tightened, and the water was carried off by a little circular trench.

Quentin shared Askerne's tent with his two subalterns.

So the night would pass, till the cry of "Rouse!" rang along the lines, and the bugles sounded the assembly, when the blankets were rolled up and strapped to the knapsacks; the wet tents were struck and folded; the pegs and mallets replaced in their bags, and the troops prepared to march in the grey morning haze, weary, wet, stiff and sore, by reposing on the damp sod.

Quentin had always fancied a bivouac a species of military pic-nic, *minus* the ladies, pink cream, and champagne; but on the first night he lay in one, when the baggage guard was lagging in the rear and no tents were pitched, as he was drenched in a soaking blanket under the cold October wind that swept down the rocky sierra, he began to have serious doubts whether man was really a warm-blooded animal.

"Ugh!" grumbled Monkton on this night, "who, with brains in his head-piece, would become a soldier?"

"You remind me," said Askerne, as he shook the water for the twentieth time from his bearskin cap, "of a story I have heard of Maitland, one of our early colonels who served on the staff of the Duke of Marlborough. It was at Blenheim, I think, when he was riding along the line accompanied by the colonel

and another aide-de-camp, whose head was suddenly shattered by a cannon shot from the Bavarian artillery. Perceiving that Maitland looked long and fixedly at the fallen man, Marlborough said angrily—

“‘Colonel Maitland, what the devil are you wondering at?’

“‘Simply, that how a man possessed of so much brains as our poor friend, ever became a soldier,’ replied Maitland, and the phlegmatic victor of Blenheim and Ramilies smiled as he rode on.”

Then the dinner during a halt on the march was not tempting, and the *cuisine* was so decidedly bad that even Monkton could not joke about it. The slices of beef fried in a camp-kettle lid, or broiled on an old ramrod—beef that had never been *cold* (the miserable ration bullocks after being goaded in rear of the troops for miles by muleteers and mounted guerillas, being shot, flayed and cut up the moment the drum beat to prepare for dinner) was always tough as india-rubber; while the soup which the soldiers tried to make with a few handfuls of rice and the bones of the said bullocks, lacked only the snails mentioned by Peregrine Pickle, to make it resemble the famous black broth of the Spartans.

A little more of this common-place detail, and then we have done.

For all Quentin suffered, the novelty of treading a new soil and all the varied scenery of Portugal could scarcely make amends; yet there were times when he could not but view with interest and pleasure the old arches and aqueducts, the stony skeletons of departed Rome, the ruined amphitheatres and temples, especially that of Diana which Quintus Sertorius built at Evora, while remains of baths and cisterns, columns, capitals and cornices of marble and jasper lying prostrate among the reeds and weeds in wild places, made him think of Dominie Skail and the rapture with which he would have lingered over them. Then there were the beautiful vineyards, the verdant valleys where the lemon and orange trees grew; the steep frowning sierras, wild and barren, but majestic; the fertile plain overlooked by the thirteen spires of Santarem; and the old Roman bridges, spanning rivers that rushed in foam down the granite steepes to mingle with the Tagus.

Little convents perched in solitudes where the French had failed to penetrate, and where now the bells rang in welcome to the British; tiny wayside chapels and holy wells, presided over by local saints; wooden crosses and cairns that marked where some paisano or guerilla had been shot by the French—green mounds that marked where the French, butchered in their turn,

had been buried without coffin or shroud, all seemed to tell of the new and strange land he traversed.

Though stout and hardy, poor Quentin's powers of endurance were sorely taxed. In his knapsack were all the necessities of a soldier—to wit, one pair of shoes and long gaiters of black cloth, shirts, socks, and mitts; a forage cap, brushes, black-ball, pipe-clay, hair-ribbon, and leather. He had to carry a blanket and great coat, a canteen of wood for water, and a canvas havresack for provisions was slung over the right shoulder; a pouch with sixty rounds of ball cartridge was over the left; add to these his musket, bayonet, belts, and grenadier cap, and the reader may believe that the poor volunteer felt life a burden before he saw the hill and spires of Portalegre.

Stiff, sore, and weary, on halting he was unable to remove his trappings, or even to take off his cap without the assistance of his servant; and he usually found himself all over livid marks, as if he had been beaten about the back and shoulders with a stick. Not the least of his discomforts was to march under the hot morning sun after a night of rain, with two wet pipeclay cross-belts smoking upon his chest.

"Ah, if Flora Warrender or Lady Rohallion could see me now!" he would think, when, at the close of each day's march, he lay breathless and powerless on the floor of a billet, or the sod of a camp, or whatever it might chance to be!

Use, however, becomes second nature, and after a time Quentin learned to carry all his harness with ease, or ceased to feel it a burden.

"Châteaux en Espagne!" He was a skilful builder of such edifices, and had often erected one of great comfort and magnificence for himself; but he found a difficulty in dreaming of them while lying under a drenched blanket, or in a tent on the sides of which the rain was rushing like Rounceval peas, while he had only a knapsack for a pillow, and Brown Bess for a bedfellow.

In the Highland regiments the gentlemen volunteers carried simply a claymore and dirk; in other regiments generally a musket only; but Cosmo was resolved to *grind* Quentin to the utmost; thus he compelled the poor lad to carry all the trappings of the stoutest grenadier.

Rowland Askerne, who loved the lad for his unrepining temper, manly spirit, and gentleness, and who, like the entire regiment, saw how studiously the haughty colonel ignored his existence, was unremitting in kindness to him; and Monkton never ceased to encourage him in his own fashion.

"Well, well," he would say, "it's queer work just now, of course; but some of these fine days you will receive a parchment

from the king, greeting you as his 'trusty and well-beloved,' appointing you ensign to that company, whereof, I hope, Richard Monkton, Esquire, is captain; so take courage Kennedy, my boy!"

He strove to do so, but felt thankful with all his heart for the prospect of a few days' halt, as the regiment approached the western gate of Portalegre, where a captain's guard of Cazadores was under arms as the Borderers marched in with bayonets fixed and colours flying, their band playing General Leslie's march, "All the Blue Bonnets are bound for the Border," since 1689 their invariable quick step. And now its lively measure woke all the echoes of this singularly picturesque old Portuguese town, which crowns the summit of a hill, where its narrow, dark, and tortuous streets, with quaint mansions overhanging the roadway, are surrounded by an old wall, among the ruins of which may be traced the foundations of twelve great towers, and a castle where, as the monks tell us, dwelt Lysias the son of Bacchus!

The town was crowded by the regiments composing the division of Sir John Hope; thus, the deserted convents, the two hospitals, and even the episcopal palace, had all become temporary barracks; and now in the stately chambers where the Bishops of Lisbon and the Counts of Gaviao, of old the lords of Portalegre, with their white-robed prebends, or their steel-clad titulados, held their chapters and courts, and where a hundred years before the period of our story, Philip, Duke of Avignon, received the submission of the ancient city, the rollicking Irishman sung "Garry-owen," as he pipeclayed his belts or polished his musket; the grave and stern Scottish sergeant daily and nightly called the roll, and John Bull in his shirt sleeves or shell jacket might be seen cooking his rations under a splendid marble mantelpiece, which bore the bishop's mitre and the count's coronet, with the knightly *paete gules* of Christ, and the green *fleur de lis* of St. Avis, while the fuel was supplied by the cedar wood of fine old cabinets or gilded furniture that had survived the sojourn of the Marshal Duke d'Abrantes and his suite in the same place.

The grenadiers of the Borderers were all billeted in a narrow and antique street, which was overshadowed by the vast facade of the cathedral; and there, from the open lattices of their room (in a house the proprietors of which were either dead or had fled), Askerne and Quentin sat smoking cigars and enjoying some of the purple wine of Oporto, from the cool, vaulted *bodega* of a neighbouring wine-house, and with their feet planted on a charcoal *brasero*, they felt, on the evening after their arrival, for the first time, that they were somewhat at home and could take their ease, with belts off and coats unbuttoned. And so they sat and watched, almost in silence, the swift-coming shadows of the October even-

ing as they deepened in the quaint vista of the old Portuguese street, where the costumes were so striking and singular; the citizen who seemed to have no lawful occupation but smoking, in his ragged mantle and broad sombrero; a secular priest with his ample paunch and shovel-shaped chapeau; a white-robed Carmelite or grey Franciscan, flitting, ghost-like, amid the masses of red coats who lounged about the doors and arcades, most of them smoking, and all chatting and laughing, till the stars came out, when the bugles would sound tattoo, and when all loiterers would have to turn in, save the quarter guards and inlying picquet.

These were ordered to be of considerable strength, as a numerous band of homeless and lawless Spanish and Portuguese guerillas, under a runaway student of Salamanca, named Baltasar de Saldos, hovered among the hills. This band was of somewhat dubious loyalty, as the members of it, more than once, had scuffles with the British foraging parties, and even fired on them—the alliance between this country and Spain being so recent, that after the long and vexatious wars of the preceding century, the people could not understand it.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

COSMO'S CRAFT.

"Small occasions in the path of life,
Lie thickly sown, while great are rarely scattered.

* * * * *

Shame seize me, if I would not rather be
The man thou art, than court-created chief
Known only by the dates of his promotion!"

JOANNA BAILLIE.

THE two first days after Quentin's arrival in Portalegre were varied by the flogging of soldiers for marauding, when they were four months in arrears of pay. One of these men was flogged by tap of drum; a measure by which half a minute was allowed to elapse between each stroke, greatly enhancing the agony; and this process went on during more than four hundred lashes, till the bare muscles were seen to quiver under the cats, and then he was removed.

On the second day, the troops that had recently arrived from England, together with a battalion of Cazadores from Lisbon, were paraded outside the walls of the little mountain city for the inspection of the lieutenant-general commanding.

Their new uniform and accoutrements contrasted strongly with the ragged, patched, and war-worn trappings of the corps which

had served during the preceding campaign, and had so rapidly cleared Portugal of the French.

The Cazadores were active, bustling, and soldier-like little Portuguese light infantry, all clad in dark green uniforms of London make, with smart shakos, having green plumes. Their ranks were ever redolent of garlic and tobacco, to all who had the misfortune to march to leeward of them, while their snubby round noses, thick lips, and dark complexions reminded all who saw them of their Moorish descent.

Prior to the infusion of British officers among them, the Portuguese soldiery were every way contemptible. Murphy tells us that in the beginning of the war in 1762, "their army was in a most wretched state, scarcely amounting to ten thousand men, most of whom were peasants, without uniform or arms, asking charity, while the officers served at the tables of their colonels;" and matters were not much improved when Sir Arthur Wellesley arrived to uphold the interests of the House of Braganza, after which he had few better or braver troops than the Lusitanian Legion.

The general of division, Sir John Hope of Rankeillour, took particular notice of the Borderers, having been colonel of the regiment about fifteen years before. He had been wounded on the Helder, like Cosmo Crawford, and had served in the first campaign of Egypt with great distinction.

He complimented Cosmo in strong terms upon the appearance and discipline of the battalion, both of which high qualities the Master had not the candour or the generosity to say were due to the enthusiasm, exertions, and genuine *esprit de corps* of Major Middleton; and as Sir John rode along the line, wearing a glazed cocked-hat, an old telescope slung across his well-worn red coat, the lace and aiguillette of which were frayed by service and blackened by gunpowder, he looked a thorough soldier. He was tall, well formed, and in the prime of life, being in his forty-second year; and Quentin regarded him with deep interest, for he was informed by Askerne, in a whisper, that "Sir John had joined the army as a volunteer in his fifteenth year, prior to his first commission as a cornet, in the 10th Light Dragoons."

"As we are about to enter Spain by the way of Badajoz," said the general to Cosmo, after the troops had been dismissed to their quarters, "I am particularly anxious to open a communication with El Estudiante."

"Is this a town which lies near it?" asked Cosmo.

"Oh, no. El Estudiante is a man," replied Sir John, laughing, while the staff joined, as in duty bound, and Cosmo reddened with anger.

"Who, or what is he?" he asked, coldly.

"A guerilla chief—Baltasar de Saldos, a personage of savage character, and very doubtful reputation."

"You recommend him badly, general."

"But truly, though."

"In what way can I assist you in the matter?" asked Cosmo, with increasing coldness of manner, as he began to fear that the unpleasant duty of opening the "communication" in question, was, perhaps, to devolve on him.

"I wish a messenger to convey a despatch from me to him—one of yours—not an officer, whose life would be too valuable; but if you have any private, a troublesome fellow, worthless, frequently in the defaulters' book—you understand me, colonel?"

"I think that I do, Sir John," replied Cosmo, whose green eyes shrunk as he inserted his glass in one, and gazed at the general, keenly; "but is the risk of delivering a message so great in Portugal, after you have cleared it of the French?"

"Stragglers, orderlies, and solitary individuals are at all times liable to be cut off, we scarcely know by whom, the country is so lawless; but this fellow, Baltasar, is somewhere among the mountains near Herreruela, beyond the Spanish frontier; and to say nothing of the wolves that infest the wild places hereabouts, there are three chances to one against any messenger returning alive, even after he has delivered our letter to Baltasar."

"A lively duty!"

"Portugal and Spain are not without traitors in the French interest ready to assassinate a red-coat; others are ready to do it merely to procure his clothing and arms, and some of the low wayside tabernas are kept by people who would cut any man's throat for the chance of finding half a vintin in his pocket. Then there are the hazards of being hanged as a spy by the French, of losing one's way among the wild, depopulated sierras, and dying there of starvation, or being devoured by the black wolves, or by those wild dogs, of which the Duke of Abrantes strove in vain to clear the country."

"A pleasant country for a sketching tour!" said Cosmo.

"Yet Sir John Moore has distinctly ordered me to communicate with these guerillas, to strengthen us and cover the flank of our advance towards the Guadiana, as it is not impossible that the enemy may push forward from Valladolid, and cut off our communication with the main body of the army, and as scouts and sharp-shooters, the guerillas are invaluable."

"If your messenger did *not* return, what proof would you have that he had ever delivered your letter?" asked Cosmo, with one of his strange smiles.

"The presence of Baltasar's armed guerillas on our flank as we advance through Spanish Estremadura, would be all the reply I wish. Colonel Napier, of the Highlanders, has said that he would rather go in person than sacrifice one of his men; but——"

"I am not so chivalrous," said Cosmo, laughing, as he shrugged his shoulders and toyed with his gathered reins alternately on each side of his charger's silky mane; "I have a fellow whom I can very well spare, one who is a nuisance to the regiment in general, and to me in particular—one of whom I should like to be handsomely rid; he is clever, sharp, and resolute, too," he added, as he and the general rode slowly side by side into Portalegre.

"He is the very kind of man I require; but," said the worthy general, hesitating and colouring, "it is not a duty on which I should wish to risk a valuable life—you understand me, Colonel Crawford?"

"Oh, perfectly; when will your letter be ready?"

"Before sunset; but what is the name of the bearer, for however numerous his chances of failure may be, I must duly accredit him in my mission to the guerilla chief—those Spaniards are so suspicious."

Cosmo took one of his own calling cards, and pencilling on it the name of Quentin Kennedy, handed it to the unsuspecting general.

"His rank?" asked the latter.

"Volunteer," was the curt reply.

"A volunteer, Colonel Crawford!" exclaimed the general; "I spoke of some private soldier, whose conduct made him worthless. The bearing of a volunteer must be careful—his honour spotless."

"Such are not his," said Cosmo, angrily, for this cross-questioning fretted his fierce and crafty temper; "and I have said that I wish to be handsomely rid of him."

"Very good—you are the best judge of how to handle your command; but if in your place, I should send him back to his friends in Britain."

"The letter," began Cosmo impatiently.

"My orderly will bring it to your quarters within an hour. Adieu, colonel."

"To-night, then, perhaps to-night!" muttered Cosmo, half aloud, through his clenched teeth, and with a sombre smile, as he saluted the general and rode off in search of Buckle, his adjutant. "A volunteer must always be the first man for duty; I swore to work this fellow to an oil, and egad! the game for

him is only beginning. Good! to think of the simple general baiting the very trap into which he is to fall. Once handsomely rid of him, I shall deceive the old folks at home anew, and pretend that the letters in which I mentioned that he was serving under me have *miscarried*."

He cast one of his sinister smiles after Sir John Hope, and spurred his horse impatiently up one of the streets of Portalegre, towards the Bishop's palace, where his quarters were, and where the colours of the Borderers were lodged under a sergeant's guard.

Sir John Hope was that distinguished Scottish officer, who, after Waterloo, was created Lord Niddry for his many brilliant services, and who, two years subsequently, succeeded to the old Earldom of Hopetoun. Concerning him a very singular story is still current in the French army.

It is to the effect, that the eldest son of Marshal Ney challenged the Duke of Wellington to a mortal duel, for his alleged share in his father's death—the place of combat to be any spot in Europe he chose to select. On receiving this cartel, the Duke is said to have replied :

"My life belongs to my country and must not be lightly risked in trifles!"

On this, one of his aides-de-camp, the Scottish Earl of Hopetoun, whom he had always mentioned with honour in his despatches, accepted the challenge in his place, and leaving Scotland, without bidding adieu to his Countess, Louisa Wedderburn, or their eleven children, repaired straight to Paris, and met young Ney on the Bois de Boulogne, where they fired at once. The story adds, that Hopetoun fell pierced by a ball in the head, in the very place where he had been wounded during the famous sortie from Bayonne in February, 1814, and that as he fell, young Ney flung his pistol in the air, exclaiming—

"*Sacré Dieu ! the Prince of Moskwa is revenged !*"*

* Unfortunately for this story (which contains some strange grains of truth, and which was told me by the Lieutenant of Marshal St. Arnaud's Spahi troop in the Crimea) the gallant Earl of Hopetoun died in his bed, from natural causes, at Paris, on the 27th August, 1823.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

QUENTIN DEPARTS.

"Would ye my death? Can that avail you?
 Or life? *what* life will ye to give?
 For this existence, grief-embittered,
 Doth hourly die, yet dying live.
 My sorrows, if ye fain would slay me,
 Your blows so fierce, so fast to deal,
 It needs not: one the least, the lightest,
 Would task endurance strong as steel."

Portuguese of Rodriguez Lobo.

ON the same evening when Quentin received the despatch from the adjutant, with instructions to start forthwith by the nearest road that led towards the frontier, Monkton was preparing to give a little supper in his billet, and was superintending the cooking thereof in person.

Ths house he occupied had belonged to some titulado of Portuguese Estremadura. The ceilings were lofty, and the cornices of the heavy and florid Palladian style were elaborately gilded, and everywhere the green *fleur-de-lis* of St. Avis (an order founded by Alphonso, for defence against the Moors, from whom he took Santarem and Lisbon) was reproduced among the decorations.

The floors were of polished oak; the furnitnre, in many instances richly gilded, was all of crimson velvet stuffed with down, and the cabinets of ebony were covered with carvings, some representing the past discoveries, victories, and glories, real or imaginary, of the kings of Portugal. Many fine paintings bore marks of additions received from the French in the shape of bayonet stabs and bullet holes, with finishing touches in burnt cork, by which Venuses and Madonnas were liberally supplied with moustachios and so forth; while the frescoes bore such lovely delineations of fair-skinned, golden-haired, and ripe-lipped goddesses and nymphs, that, as Monkton said, "they made one long for pagan times again." Over a Venus being attired in scanty garments by some completely nude graces, was the motto, "*Si non caste tantum modo caute.*"

"Which means?" asked Askerne, who had been trying to make it out.

"In good Portuguese, 'If you can't be chaste, at least be cautious,' an old-fashioned aphorism," said Monkton.

"Poor Portugal!" said Askerne, thoughtfully; "she is left now with but mere traditions of her past; a country without

kings, warriors, poets or painters. The land of Camoens, of Rodriguez Lobo, of Antonio Ferreria, Bernardes, the captive of Alcazalquiver, of Andrade de Cominha, cannot *now* produce one patriotic song."

In one corner of the apartment a dark stain on the floor showed where blood had been lately shed, and there were the marks of a woman's hand upon the wall and oak-boards, as if she had been dragged from place to place, thus telling of some terrible outrage—an episode of its recent occupants, the French.

"Now, what the devil is the meaning of this?" asked Monkton, looking up from his culinary operations as Buckle entered "Kennedy can't be the first man for duty."

"No, he is not," replied Buckle, curtly, for having on his sword and gorget, he felt and looked official.

"Then why the——"

"Why select him, you would ask, with the addition of some unpleasant adjective?"

"Yes."

"Because a volunteer is always the first man for any duty that is dangerous."

"And is this duty so?" asked Quentin, with very excusable interest.

"Undoubtedly—there is no use concealing the fact, as foreknowledge will make you wary; and if successful, it will be reported favourably to head-quarters, 'that negotiations with the formidable guerilla chief—what's his infernal name—have been honourably concluded, through the courage and diplomatic skill of that very distinguished volunteer, Mr. Quentin Kennedy, now serving with the 25th Foot, whom I recommend most warmly to your Royal Highness's most earnest and favourable consideration'—that is the sort of thing," added the adjutant, putting aside his sword and belt, as the odour of the cooking reached his olfactory nerves.

"You think, Mr. Buckle, that the colonel will recommend me thus?" asked Quentin, his young heart throbbing with delight.

"And Sir John Hope, too—of course; they can do nothing else," was the confident reply, for the adjutant believed in what he said.

Hope, pride, and enthusiasm swelled up in the poor lad's breast as the adjutant spoke.

"Ah," thought he, "I should have offered my hand to Cosmo, and shall do so when I *return*."

"Congratulate me," major, he exclaimed, hastening to Middleton, who entered at that moment; "I have been chosen for an important duty already."

"So I have heard—so I have heard," he replied, quickly, shaking his head and his pigtail with it.

"And what do you think of it? Here is the despatch, addressed, 'Al Senor Don Baltasar de Saldos, Herrerueta, *via* Valencia de Alcantara.'"

"You are particularly to avoid that town," said Buckle, emphatically.

"Why?"

"Because a French garrison occupy it—some of General de Ribeaupierre's brigade."

"It is a little way across the frontier," said Quentin; "so, my dear sir, what do you think of the duty?"

"Think—that the whole affair is a cruelty and a shame!" exclaimed the old major, bluntly. "I've been looking at the map, and see that the place is some miles beyond the frontier—in the enemy's country, in fact."

"Come, major, don't discourage him," said Buckle; "he must go now, and there is an end of it."

"I wish there was. Does he go in uniform?"

"Yes; it is safer."

"How?"

"In mufti he might be taken for a spy."

"Uniform did not protect my poor friend André of the 26th, when taken on a similar mission."

"Come, come, I'll bet you a pony apiece that Kennedy comes off with flying colours," said Monkton. "Some more butter, Askerne—where's the pepper-box?—Quentin is a devilish sharp fellow, and always keeps his weather-eye open, as the sailors say."

"What is the distance between this and Herrerueta?" asked Askerne, who had hitherto remained silent.

"About thirty British miles, as a crow flies."

"And he is to proceed on foot?"

"But he can do so at leisure—there is no word of breaking up our cantonments here yet."

"But in this country miles seem to vary very much, Mr. Buckle," said Quentin; "when am I supposed to be back?"

"Back?" replied Buckle, rather puzzled.

"Excuse my asking," said the lad, modestly; "but I am so ignorant of the country, and so forth."

"True, Kennedy. Well, supposing that you see this Baltasar de Saldos—fine melodramatic name, isn't it?—he is doubtless a fellow in a steeple-crowned hat and seven-league boots, all stuck over pistols and daggers—supposing you see him at once, there is nothing to prevent you being back in six days, at latest."

"So we are about to make a night of it, the first jolly one we

Q

have had since landing at the mouth of the Maciera, and, damme, here is poor Quentin going to leave us!" said Monkton, who in his shirt sleeves was devilling a huge dish of kidneys over a brasero, for the orthodox fuel of which (charcoal) he had substituted the shutter of a window, torn down and broken to pieces. "One glass more of Oporto for the gravy, another dash of pepper, and the banquet is complete. You must have supper with us to-night, ere you go, Quentin."

"The same readily-found fuel was roasting on the marble slab of the richly carved fireplace, a goodly row of sputtering castanos, which were superintended by Rowland Askerne.

"Where is Pimple to-night?" he asked, looking up.

"With Colville, on the quarter guard," said Monkton; "and, rosaries and wrinkles! where do you think they are stationed?"

"By your exclamation, opposite a convent, probably."

"Exactly—el Convento de Santa Engracia; but it hasn't a window to the street, so they might as well have the wall of China to contemplate."

A borrachio skin of Herrera del Duque (the famous wine of the Badajoz district), of which Monkton had somehow become possessed, lay on the beautiful marqueterie table, like a bloated bagpipe, while tin canteens, silver-rimmed drinking horns, tea-cups, everything but crystal vessels, were ranged round to imbibe the contents from.

The plates and other appurtenances of the table were of the same varied description, and were furnished by the guests themselves, as the French had carried off or destroyed nearly everything in the house. A canteen of brandy and a loaf of fine white bread completed the repast, to which all brought good humour and appetites that were quite startling, better than any they could ever procure for the dainties of the mess-table at Colchester.

Servants were entirely dispensed with; thus the conversation was free and unrestrained, like the jests and laughter.

"I can scarcely assure myself that you are actually going to-night," said the major to Quentin; "the whole arrangement is a black, burning shame; an older man, one of more experience, one who has been longer in the country and had served the campaign in Portugal, should have been sent on this duty."

"But the greater is my chance of honour!" said Quentin, cheerfully.

"And peril too. Your health—and success, boy! This wine is excellent, Monkton—but the service is going to the devil! we have never been the men we were since the abolition of hair-powder and pigtails, brigadier wigs and Nivernois hats! Think of a garrison court-martial according four hundred and odd lashes

to a poor devil yesterday, for borrowing a loaf of bread like this, when we are all so far in arrears of pay; and yet, I remember when we ate Jack Andrews' baby in America, men were tucked up to the next tree for just as little."

"Jack Andrews' baby," said Quentin, looking up from his devilled kidneys at the familiar name.

"It is an old regimental story," said the major, laughing, as he filled his horn with wine from the gushing borrachio; "it happened when we were in garrison at Fort St. John on the Richelieu River (a place I have often told you about); provisions were scarce, for the Yankees had intercepted all our supplies, so that at times we were literally starving, while to conciliate the colonists, strict orders were issued against plundering. It was as much as your life was worth if the provost-marshal caught you steal anything, even a kiss from a girl in Vermont or New York, so such a thing as levanting with a sucking-pig or a turkey-poult, was not to be thought of even in our wildest dreams; moreover they would not have *sold* a chicken for thrice its weight in gold, to a red-coat!

"Some weeks passed over thus; we were getting very lanky and lean, and though our lovely countenances were ruddied by the American frost, we were always hungry, always thirsty, and longed in our day-dreams for a cooper of the old mess port, or a devilled drumstick; but these were only to be had at the headquarters of the Borderers and Cameronians, then far away in the Jerseys, in pursuit of the rebels, under Lord Stirling; and we often shivered with hunger as well as with cold under the ice-covered roofs of our wooden barrack at night.

"Lord Rohallion of ours, had a servant named Jack Andrews, a knowing old file, from his own place in Carrick, who contrived to make off with a sheep. How or where Jack did it, the Lord only knows, and we never inquired; but the owner, a pennsylvanian quaker, made an outcry about it, and the provost's guard were speedily on poor Jack's track with the gallows rope. A stab with a bayonet in the throat soon silenced the sheep, and Jack brought it under his greatcoat to our quarters, and while the provost, with Simon Pure, was overhauling the soldiers' barrack, we tucked up the spoil in a cradle, with a blanket over it and a muslin cap round its head. We set a piper's wife to rock it, while Jack pretended to make caudle at the fire, and in this occupation they were found, when the provost came in, intent on death, and Broadbrim on retribution.

"Hush-a-by, baby, on the tree-top,

When the wind blows the cradle will rock,"

sung the piper's wife, patting the sheep tenderly.

"Hush," said Jack to the intruders; "don't stir for the life that is in you!"

"Why—what is the matter with the baby?"

"It's either measles or smallpox; we don't know which," said Jack.

"Yea verily—aye—ho, hum," snivelled the Quaker.

"All right," said the provost, as he withdrew with his guard to search elsewhere. The sheep was soon cut up, divided, and a sumptuous supper Major André, Rohallion and a select few of us had that night, and ere morning all traces of it had disappeared, save the skin, which, to the rage of the provost, was found concealed, no one knew by whom, between the sheets of his bed. Long after the fort was taken by the Yankees, and none had a fear of coming to the drum-head, the whole story came out, and many a laugh we had at the provost-marshal and Jack Andrews' baby."

The names mentioned thus incidentally by the good major recalled so much of home and of old associations to Quentin, that his warm heart swelled with kind and affectionate memories; and now, when on the eve of departing from friends that he loved so well, and who had a regard so great for him—departing on a lonely and decidedly perilous duty—he was on the point of telling them the story of his earlier life, so that, if aught occurred to him, his military companions might write to Rohallion; but thoughts of the haughty Master chilled him, and he repressed the suddenly-conceived idea.

And now the time came when he was compelled to depart.

He had three days' cooked provisions in his havresack, and he had still money enough remaining for his wants in a land where he had to journey almost by stealth, and where the French had left so little either to buy or to sell.

He took with him his great-coat and forage-cap; in lieu of his heavy musket, Askerne gave him a sword, and Middleton a pair of pistols; and the former accompanied him nearly two miles on the road from Portalegre.

"You dare danger fearlessly, Quentin," said he.

"I dare it as those who are friendless and alone do! The knowledge that I have few, perhaps none, who would really regret me, renders life of little value."

"Come, Kennedy, egad! this bitterness is ungrateful," said Askerne, in a tone of reproach.

"True, my friend, forgive me! I believe that you at least, with Middleton and Warriston—he's on duty, remember me to him—Monkton, and a few *others* that are far, far away, have, indeed, a sincere regard for me."

"Well, then, how many more, or what more would you have? The world is not so bad after all," said Askerne, laughing, as he shook his hand warmly and bade him adieu, after giving him much good advice concerning prudence and care of consorting with strangers on the way; for Askerne and his brother officers saw, or suspected that the colonel's selection of the lad was the result of bad feeling; while Quentin deemed it but a part of his hard and venturesome lot as a gentleman volunteer.

Often he turned to wave a farewell to Askerne, whose erect and soldier-like figure was lessening in the distance, as he walked back to Portalegre. At last, a turn of the road, where it wound suddenly between some olive groves, hid him entirely; and, for the first time, an emotion of utter loneliness came over Quentin's heart as he hastened towards the darkening hills.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

ANXIOUS FRIENDS.

"Oh, Leolyn, be obstinately just;
Indulge no passion and deceive no trust.
Let never man be bold enough to say,
Thus, and no farther shall my passion stray;
The first crime past compels us into more,
And guilt grows *fate*, which was but *choice* before."

AARON HILL.

THE third day and the fourth passed away at Portalegre; on the fifth and sixth, Major Middleton and others, who felt a friendly interest in Quentin Kennedy, began to surmise, when they met on the morning or evening parade, or in each other's billets, or so forth, that it was time now he had reported his return, and the good or bad success of his journey, to the colonel and general commanding the division.

Other days passed; it was whispered about from staff-office officials that ere long the division would leave Portalegre, as the whole army was about to advance against the enemy; and then Captain Askerne, Monkton, Buckle, the adjutant, and others, became double anxious about the lad, and were interested as much as men could be under their circumstances, when human life is deemed of so little value as it is when on active service and before an enemy.

As for Warriston of the 94th, not being under the immediate command of Colonel Crawford, he openly and bitterly inveighed against "the iniquity of having sacrificed a mere youth in such a

manner," and threatened "to bring the matter prominently before Sir John Moore," who commanded the forces in Portugal.

"He has, perhaps, gone over to the enemy—a despatch is sometimes well paid for," said Cosmo, in his sneering manner, when some of the remarks reached him on parade, one morning.

"Impossible, my dear sir—impossible!" said Middleton, testily, while spurring and reining in his horse; I know the lad as if he were my own son, and feel assured that he is the soul of honour; that he was all ardour for the service, and that he would die rather than disgrace himself."

"Indeed—ah—aw—you think so?" drawled Cosmo, with his glass in his sinister eye, as he surveyed the major with a glance of somewhat mingled cast.

"I do, colonel," was the emphatic rejoinder.

"He has disappeared at all events—a dubious phrase. If the fellow has not levanted to the Duke of Dalmatia with General Hope's despatch, may his heart not have failed him? May he not have shown the white feather? Better men than he, among the Belem Rangers, have done so ere now."

The imaginary corps referred to contained one of the most offensive imputations to the ears of Peninsula men; thus Captain Askerne exclaimed—

"Cowardice, Colonel Crawford—would you infer cowardice?"

"I infer nothing, gentlemen, but that better men than he have shown the white feather."

"Not in *the Line*, that I am aware of," was the somewhat pointed remark of Middleton; and Cosmo, who had lately come from the Guards, crimsoned with suppressed passion.

"A volunteer is a soldier of fortune, and none such can ever be a coward," said Askerne, stoutly.

"Of course not—the idea is absurd," added Middleton, looking round the group of officers, who glanced their approval.

"You are warm, Major Middleton," said Cosmo, sternly, while his eyes gleamed with their most dangerous expression; "somewhat unnecessarily warm on this trivial subject, I think."

"I am at least honest, colonel, as he must be who defends the absent or the dead."

"We have had enough of this—to your companies—fall in, gentlemen!" said the colonel, sternly and impatiently, as he spurred his horse, unsheathed his sword, and the formula of the parade began, after which he revenged himself by drilling the corps, under a drizzling rain for nearly two hours, forcing Askerne's grenadiers to skirmish in a swamp, and making old Major Middleton put the battalion twice through the eighteen manoeuvres.

About this time a patrol of Portuguese cavalry found near the high

road that led through a desert towards the Spanish frontier, the remains of a man, almost reduced to a skeleton, picked, gnawed, and torn asunder, to all appearance recently, by those devouring wolves and wild dogs which infest the mountains of the district.

Terrible surmises of Quentin's fate were now whispered among the Borderers; the officer in command of the patrol was closely questioned by Middleton, Warriston, and others; but he constantly stated that the victim had probably been stripped by robbers before being devoured, as nothing had been found near the remains that might lead to their identification, or in any way connect them with the missing Quentin Kennedy. Thus, in default of other proof, as time wore on, the members of the regiment made up their minds to consider the poor bones as his, and concluded that he had perished miserably in the wilderness.

To do Cosmo Crawford justice, there were times when he was not without secret emotions of shame, and even of compunction, for the part he acted to Quentin. His own conscience, the small still voice that would speak, could not acquit him; but those gleams of the better spirit came only briefly and at intervals, and such unwelcome thoughts were always eventually stifled by the constitutional malignity of his nature, and he would mutter to himself—

“Pshaw! he is well away; what the devil was he to me, or I to him?”

It was while the troops were lingering at Portalegre and elsewhere along the Spanish frontier, that Lord Castlereagh's despatch, containing the first organized plan of the future campaign, arrived in Lisbon.

In the northern provinces of Spain, thirty five thousand horse and foot were to be employed; ten thousand of these were to be embarked from British ports, and the rest to be drafted from our army of occupation in Portugal; and these were supposed to be equal to cope with the vast hosts pouring through the many passes of the Pyrenees from France and Germany, and those which already blackened all the plains of Castile and Arragon.

We have elsewhere mentioned the vast strength of the French army, whose head-quarters were at Vittoria.

The brave but ill-fated Sir John Moore was ordered to take the field without delay with the troops that were under his own command. Some fortress or city (unnamed) in Galicia, or on the borders of the kingdom of Leon, was to be the place for concentrating the whole allied armies of Britain, Spain, and Portugal; and his specific plan of operations was *afterwards* to be concerted with the stupid, jealous, and uncompromising local juntas, and the obstinate and impracticable Spanish generals.

These orders were perilous, loose, and vague; they prom

nothing, but only that war at any hazard was to be waged in Old Castile and on the banks of the Ebro.

And now for a time let us change the scene to a not less tuneful or classic locality—the rocky hills and heather braes of Carrick's western shore.

CHAPTER XL.

THE PARAGRAPH.

"My kindred are dead, my love is fled;
 Courage, my heart, thou canst love no more
 Pale is my cheek, my body is weak;
 Courage, my heart, 'twill soon be o'er.
 Dim are my eyes with tears of sorrow,
 They ache for a night without a morrow."—M. N. S.

It was towards the end of the month—the last days of October, now.

The acorns were falling from the moss-grown oaks, the hollies and hedge-rows were gay with scarlet berries and haws, the grey sea-gulls were often seen mingling with the black gleds and hoodie-crows far afield inshore. The redwing, the fieldfare, and the woodcock had come again to their old haunts on the braes of Rohallion, in the oakwood shaw, in the hawthorn birks that overhang the Girvan, and the deep carse land where the rushes grew and the water flowed of old.

The autumn winds, as they swept through the hollow glen, shook down the last brown leaves of the old sycamores, and the spoils of the past summer lay in rustling heaps about the haunted gate and the guns of La Bonne Citoyenne on the battery before the castle-keep. From the tall square chimneys of the old feudal stronghold on the storm-beaten bluff, the gudeman of Elsie Irvine and other fishermen from the coves, saw the smoke of the rousing fires ascending into the grey autumn sky, and the evening lights glittering early in the great towers, a land-mark now to them as it had been to their forefathers long ages ago, when the Scot and the Saxon found work nearer home for their swords than fighting for conquered Spain or ravaged Portugal.

"People now-a-days, with the help of the penny-post and the telegraph, and the endless means of communication and of coming and going, are certainly able to *care for* a greater number of persons than they could have done a hundred years ago," says a recent writer in the "Cornhill;" but he might have said thirty years ago, so far as the people of Scotland are concerned.

Thus, secluded by her own retiring habits and personal circumstances, as well as by those incident to the time, content to reside in her narrow circle, and chiefly among her husband's household and dependents, Lady Rohallion's heart yearned with all a mother's love for her lost *protégé*, the more, perhaps, the cold and repulsive manner of her only son Cosmo had cast her warm and affectionate heart somewhat back, as it were, upon herself; though the memory of much if not all his shortcoming in the way of filial reverence and regard were now by her forgotten, or merged in the idea of his absence at the seat of war.

Quentin's memory she cherished chiefly in silence; for, still fostering her hopes or views with regard to Cosmo and the wilful little heiress of Ardgour, she spoke of the lost one but reservedly and at long intervals, to the latter; though, sooth to say, young Fernie of Fernwoodlee, a neighbouring proprietor, had become so frequent a visitor at the castle, that, so far as good looks, assiduity, and unwearied industry as an admirer might go, he had fair—gossips said—to supplant both Quentin and the Master of Rohallion, for a lover lost, and another commencing a campaign, were just as satisfactory as no lover at all.

It was about this time that the post-bag brought by John Legate, the running-footman, from Maybole, was opened before Lord Rohallion by his faithful old henchman Jack Andrews, and emptied on the breakfast-table.

One small missive, bearing Fernwoodlee's crest—a fern leaf all proper—he handed to Flora, who coloured slightly and said it referred to a proposed ride as far as the ruins of Kilhenzie, to see the Eglinton hounds throw off, as the keeper had promised, to find a leash of foxes in the cover there.

"These fox-hunting fools are beginning their work betimes—why, this is only October," said his lordship drily; "they would be better employed riding in the light dragoons against the enemies of Europe."

Pushing the rest of the letters across the table to Lady Rohallion, as if for perusal at her leisure, he opened the latest newspaper, and betook himself, with true military instinct, to the gazette and matters pertaining to the war against France and the Corsican, by land and sea.

Erelong, it was with an exclamation of astonishment that shook the powder from his venerable pigtail, that made Lady Rohallion permit the urn to overrun her teacup, Flora to start nervously, Mr. Spillsby to drop the egg-stand with its contents, and Jack Andrews to spring mechanically to "attention" on his lame leg, that his lordship, raising his voice to an unusually high pitch, read the following paragraph:—

"On the 6th October, the final despatch of the premier reached the general commanding at Lisbon, and by this time the whole army will have been in motion across the Spanish frontier, to chastise the barbarian hordes of the Corsican tyrant, under whose sway the people of France and Spain alike are groaning. We rejoice to say that before marching from Portalegre, Lieutenant-General Sir John Hope of Rankeillour most successfully opened a communication with the famous guerilla, El Estudiante, a matter fully and finally arranged by the skill and courage of Mr. Quentin Kennedy, a young volunteer, then serving with H.M. 25th Regiment, or 'King's Own Borderers.'"

"Quentin!" exclaimed Flora, rushing behind Lord Rohallion's chair, her cheeks flushing red, as she peeped over his shoulder.

"Quentin Kennedy!" said Lady Rohallion, in a breathless voice, as she grew pale and trembled.

"The boy is found—found at last! There, read the paragraph for yourselves," said his lordship, flourishing the paper over his head.

Poor Lady Rohallion made many ineffectual efforts to do as he bid her; but her eyes were full of tears, and her spectacles were quite obscured.

"Spillaby—Andrews, send for John Girvan; zounds! the 25th, too—the blessed old number!—here's news for him! The lost is found again! You'll write to him, Winny—and Flora, too—gad, we'll all write!" continued the old lord, in a very incoherent way. "The cunning rogue, to keep us in suspense so long, and to be wearing the buttons of the old Borderers all the time. It must be he; there can't be two Quentin Kennedies; oh, no—of course it must be he!"

"There is something strange in this," said Lady Rohallion, finding relief in tears; "how many letters, Flora, have we had from Cosmo since he left us?"

"Five."

"Five letters!"

"One from Colchester; others from Santarem and Abrantes; and two from Portalegre."

"Exactly," said Lord Rohallion, on whose benign brow a cloud gathered; "five letters, and in none of them has one word escaped him concerning the poor lad who joined the corps before him—the dear old 25th, of my earliest memories. It is not generous, Winny; I don't envy Quentin his commanding officer; it shows a bad animus, and I am sorry our boy should behave so."

Lady Winifred was silent, for she felt the truth of what her husband said; and Flora, full of her own joyous thoughts, was silent too.

"Read over the paragraph again, Flora, darling; egad, I must cut it out, and send it over to Earl Hugh, at Eglinton; and while Flora read, Rohallion walked to and fro, rubbing his hands with intense satisfaction and delight.

"But, good heavens, my lord!" she suddenly exclaimed, while the colour left her face, "what is this that follows?" there is here another paragraph, about—about——"

"About what?"

"Poor Quentin," she added, faintly.

"Read it!" said Rohallion, impetuously.

"We regret to have to add, it is feared that after accomplishing this valuable public service with the guerilla, our enterprising young soldier has fallen a sacrifice to his zeal, or the lawless state of the country, as—as he has not been heard of since.'"

Flora's sweet voice died away almost in a tremulous whisper as she read this blighting paragraph, which Lord Rohallion, after hastily snatching the paper from her, read again and again, with his brows deeply knit.

It did not fall upon him with the crushing effect it had upon the two ladies, who sat silently weeping, for the words of the paragraph were, to them, terribly suggestive and vague; and now the old quartermaster, who had been noisily summoned by his veteran comrade the valet, arrived to join the conclave; and truly, had a thirteen-inch bombshell, shot from a mortar of similar diameter, exploded among the breakfast equipage, worthy John Girvan could not have seemed more astonished and bewildered than he did by the whole affair.

Lord Rohallion and he, as old soldiers, endeavoured to explain the matter away, and to speak from past experience of many instances of men reported as "missing" who always turned up again; newspaper paragraphs in general they treated with great contempt, and expressed their certain conviction that "by this time," no doubt, he had rejoined the corps.

Indeed, so certain were they of this that Lord Rohallion desired the quartermaster to write at once; Flora, with charming frankness, offered to enclose a tiny note, and the old general wrote at once by the next mail to the Horse Guards, urging "the immediate promotion of his young friend to the first ensigncy at the disposal of his Royal Highness the Field Marshal Commanding-in-Chief—in the 25th Foot, if practicable."

This done, the male part of the household, though full of the affair, and their innumerable yarns of the corps, which it had called to memory, felt more composed on the subject. The quartermaster furbished up his old red coat, and remained to dinner: Flora's engagement to ride with young Fernwoodlee and

the meet at Kilhenzie, were committed to oblivion, and were utterly forgotten, as she sat alone, full of thought, on the old mossgrown garden-seat, with the autumn leaves whirling round her.

Through the branches of the stripped trees on which the rooks were crawling, the sunlight fell aslant upon the copper gnomon of the ancient sun and moon dial, which occupied the centre of the quaint Scoto-French garden, and round the pedestal of which Quentin, to please her, during the last spring, had trained a creeping plant.

The plant was still there, but its tendrils and trailers were dead, withered, and yellow, and sadly Flora felt in her heart that she was lonely, and that Rohallion was now a *broken home*—broken, indeed, as if Death himself had been there!

Lady Winifred was also alone.

The noonday sun was streaming as of old into the yellow damask drawing-room, and the sea-coal fire crackled on the hearth between the delft-lined jambs cheerily and brightly. Before it, on the thick cosy rug, a sleek tom-cat sat winking and purring, and the favourite terrier of Quentin, coiled up round as a ball, was there too, but fast asleep beside the many-spotted Dalmatian dog, which always followed the old-fashioned family carriage.

The antique ormolu clock, that ticked so loudly on the mantelpiece on the night when Quentin was rescued from the wreck, and his father's corpse was cast on the surf-beaten sand, and when he, a wailing child, was brought by Elsie Irvine to Rohallion, was ticking there still, quietly, regularly, and monotonously, and Lady Winifred looked at its quaint dial wistfully, as she might have done in the face of an old and familiar friend.

Now Quentin and her beloved and only son were both far, far away; both were to encounter the perils of war, and she might never see them more! How much and how many things had happened, she thought, and still the old clock ticked there monotonously, even as it had done when, on an evening now many, many years ago, she came a blooming bride to the old castle by the sea; and so it might continue to tick, long after she, and her comely and affectionate old lord, lay side by side among the Crawfords of past centuries in the Rohallion aisle of the venerable kirk whose tower she could see terminating the woody vista of yonder lonely glen.

The paragraph of the morning had called up a multitude of sad thoughts that had long been buried, and she felt melancholy, almost miserable, and opening her escritoire, she looked long and

earnestly on the relics of Quentin's father—his commission in the French service, the letter in the poor man's pocket-book, and the ring that was taken from his finger, bearing the name of *Josephine*—the boy's mother, doubtless.

The dominie, to whom the quartermaster lost no time in hastening with the intelligence, like the old lord, was stout in his belief that Quentin would, as he phrased it, "cast up again."

"Disappeared," he repeated two or three times; "the bairn no since heard o'; the thing's no possible! He will, he shall return again, be assured, to receive his reward, for he is worthy of a crown of gold—worthy of it, yea, as ever were Manlius Torquatus or Valerius Corvus, ilk ane o' wham, as we are told in Livy, slew a Gaul in single combat."

This classic reward did not seem very probable, when a few weeks after, a long official letter was brought to Rohallion, and added greatly to the anxiety and perplexity of the inmates thereof.

In this missive the military secretary, by direction of H.R.H. the Duke of York, "presented his compliments to Major-General Lord Rohallion, K.C.B., and regretted to acquaint him that it was impossible to entertain his request with regard to Mr. Quentin Kennedy, a volunteer with the 25th Foot, as matters had transpired which might render his clearance before a general court-martial necessary."

CHAPTER XLI.

THE WAYSIDE CROSS AND WELL.

"If in this exile dark and drear,
To which my fate has doomed me now,
I should unnoticed die—what tear,
What tear of sympathy will flow?
For I have sought an exile's woe,
And fashioned my own misery!
Who then will pity me?"

Cancionero de Amberes, 1557.

As Quentin walked on in solitude after Rowland Askerne left him, he could not help musing, as he frequently did, on the changes a short time had wrought in him and in his ideas. It would seem that from a mere day-dreaming school-boy, whose most onerous purposes were to fill his basket with trout from the Girvan, the Doon, or the Lollards' Linn; to supply the cook with an occasional brace of ptarmigan from the oakwood shaw,

or of blackcock from the Mains of Kilhenzie; from trying a pad for Flora, or culling the flowers which he knew she loved most, he had risen to be a man and a soldier, valued by his comrades, all officers of bravery and position, trusted by his superiors, and charged with a great and confidential duty—a portion of the vast game of war and politics now played by Britain for the deliverance of Spain; and yet, withal, he longed for a companion, and to hear the voice of a friend, for a sense of intense loneliness gradually stole over him as the twilight deepened, and the purple shadows grew more sombre on the hills of Portuguese Estremadura.

To Quentin it seemed that his bodily strength and bulk had increased, for drill and marching had developed every muscle to the fullest extent; thus he was stronger, more active and hardy than before.

He felt too, that the time had come when youth was no longer a libel against him; the time for doing something worthy of being mentioned in a despatch of the commander-in-chief, in the government gazette, in general orders—something gallant, manly, and dashing; and that he would turn the occasion to its best account, and achieve something glorious, “or,” as romances and melo-dramas have it, “perish in the attempt.”

“If I acquit myself well in this, my first duty, it shall in itself prove a revenge upon Cosmo!” thought he.

And so he trod manfully and hopefully on, dreaming of the future, knowing but little of the path he was at present to pursue, and less of the perils and pit-falls that were around it.

As the evening deepened into night with great rapidity, for there is very little twilight in those regions—the mighty shadows of the sierra fell eastward in a sombre mass across the valley through which lay the road—a mere bridal path—towards the Spanish frontier, while the ranges of peaks that faced the west were still glowing in ruddy saffron or pale purple against the blue dome of the star-studded sky.

About twelve miles from Portalegre, the road pursued by Quentin enters a narrow gorge or immense chasm or cleft which rends the mountains from their summit to their base. Down the steep wall of rock on one side, a spring trickles for some hundred feet, and at the foot, near the road-way, it is received into the quaintly carved basin of an ancient stone fountain, behind which stands a memorial cross.

A niche in the shaft of the latter contains a little wayside altar. An image of the Madonna was rudely and gaudily painted in the recess, and before it a copper lamp was always kept burning. This shrine, once reputed to be of great sanctity, had been mutilated and its lamp destroyed by the French; but it had been

replaced by another, which was always supplied with wick and oil by the passing muleteers, contrabandistas, guerillas, and others.

The rays of this lamp were burning feebly in the vast rocky solitude, forming a strange and picturesque feature in the deep dark dell, the silence of which was broken only by the plash of the slender thread of liquid that filtered or trickled down the granite face of the dissevered mountain.

This cross and well had been built by Alphonso I., in the year that he achieved his greatest victory over the united arms of five Moorish sovereigns. It had been deemed holy even in those days, for there he had halted and prayed when on the march with his mail-clad knights to the capture of Santarem; and an inscription, frequently renewed, invited the passer to say a prayer for the repose of his soul, and the souls of all the good and true Portuguese who drew their swords against the Moslem.

A long ray of light shed by the rising moon, shone down the cleft at the bottom of which the road lay, casting the shadows of the well and votive cross far along the narrow gorge. The thick foliage of some gigantic Portuguese laurels, which grew in the interstices of the rocks, glittered like bronze gemmed with silver sheen, and offered a resting place for the night; so Quentin, as he felt weary, crept under the branches, which formed a pleasant shelter.

The turf below was soft and dry, and to him, who had slept so often on the bare earth during his march to the frontier, it seemed a comfortable couch enough. The shaft of King Alphonso's cross on one side and the wall of rock on the other protected him from prowling wolves in the front and rear; the stems of the giant laurels formed barrier on a third side, and the fourth, which was open, he might defend with his weapons if attacked.

He took a draught from his canteen, which was filled with rum and water, and placing it under his head for a pillow, with his sword and loaded pistols ready by his side, he addressed himself to sleep.

The air was filled with a strange but delicious perfume, which came from those little aromatic shrubs that grow wild everywhere throughout Spain and Portugal. The intense stillness of the place, the only sounds there being the trickle of the far-falling water and the croakings of some bull-frogs among the long grass, made him wakeful for a time.

He felt neither alarm nor anxiety, but utterly lonely, and he said over a prayer that in infancy he had often repeated at Lady Rohallion's knee; then something holy and placid stole over his heart; sleep at last closed his eyes and he slumbered peacefully besides the old stone cross of our Lady of Battles.

So passed the first night of his absence from head-quarters.

When Quentin awoke next morning after a long and sound slumber, the result of youth, high health, and the toil of the past day, though he had acquired all a soldier's facility for sleeping in strange places and strange beds, or without other couch than the bare sod, he was at first somewhat confused and puzzled on perceiving the bower of leaves above him, and a minute elapsed before he could remember where he was, and how he came to be roosting under those huge Portuguese laurels.

Then the despatch rushed upon his memory; he searched his breast pocket, and found the important document was safe; his weapons were all right, and he was about to creep forth, when he suddenly perceived the figure of a man near the well, and, remembering the reiterated advices of Askerue and others, he paused to observe him.

His first idea was that the stranger must be a robber, for, to a Briton, Portuguese and Spaniards too have usually that unpleasant character in their aspect. Their sallow visages, deep dark eyes, densely black beards and moustaches, with their slouching sombrero, and large, many-folded cloak of dark brown stuff, together with a certain fixed scrutiny of expression when observing strangers, give them all the bravo look and bearing of the "sensation" ruffian or mysterious bandit of a minor melodrama; thus, says a recent writer, "in consequence of the difficulty of outliving what has been learnt in the nursery, many of our countrymen have, with the best intentions, set down the bulk of the population of the Peninsula as one gang of robbers."

The Spaniard in question, for such he seemed to be, was a young man of powerful and athletic form; his face was sallow and colourless, and his hair and eyes were black. He was closely shaven, save a heavy moustache, which had a very ferocious twist across each cheek towards the tip of the ear. His features were very handsome, and his whole appearance was eminently striking.

He had a huge cloak—what Spaniard has *not*, generally to cover his rags rather than his finery—but this he had flung aside, and Quentin could perceive that he had a well-worn *zamarra* of sheepskin over a gaily embroidered shirt, a pair of crimson pantaloons, which seemed to have belonged to a hussar, and they ended in strong leather *abarcas*, which were laced with thongs from the ankle to the knee. He had a dagger and pair of pistols in his flowing yellow sash, and close by him lay one of those long, old-fashioned travelling staffs, shod with iron and loaded with lead, called by the Portuguese a *cajado*.

Thus, upon the whole, considering the difference of their

stature and bodily strength, Quentin prudently thought that the stranger was not a personage to be intruded upon without due consideration.

Reverently removing his black sombrero, which was rather battered and rusty, and had a gilt image of our Lady del Pilar on the gay broad scarlet band thereof, the Spaniard approached the wayside shrine, and kneeling before it, crossed himself three times with great devotion, while muttering a short prayer. Then seating himself on the grassy sward behind the well, he pulled a little book from the pocket of his zamarra, and began to peruse it very leisurely while smoking a cigarito and making his frugal breakfast on a few dry raisins and a crust of hard bread, which he dipped from time to time in the cool water of the gurgling fountain.

"This cannot be a bad kind of fellow," thought Quentin, who felt somewhat ashamed of lurking from one man; so he half-cocked his pistols, placed them in his girdle, and crept forth from behind the stone cross, saying:

"*Buenos días, señor.*"

"*Señor, good morrow,*" replied the Spaniard, with a hand on his dagger, while he surveyed Quentin with a quietly grim, but unmoved countenance, without rising from his recumbent posture; "are there any more of you under these bushes?"

"No—I am alone."

"*Por mi vida,* but you choose a strange hiding place!" said the other, with a glance of distrust.

"A strange sleeping-place, you should say rather, señor—yet not a bad one," said Quentin, laughing, and willing to conciliate the stranger, who closed his book after quietly turning down a leaf to mark his place; "I crept in over night, and have slept there until now."

"Signs of a good digestion or a clear conscience."

"Of both, I hope, thank Heaven."

"I am indifferently provided with either; yet I can breakfast on this poor crust, and be thankful to God and our Blessed Lady for it."

"I can give you something better, Señor Portuguese," said Quentin, unbuttoning his havresack.

"*Muchos gracias,*" replied the other; "but remember, señor, that I am a Castilian, and in Spain we have a belief that a bad Spaniard makes a tolerably good Portuguese."

"I beg pardon, señor, but your dress——"

"My dress!" interrupted the other with a sardonic grin; "*oh, por el vidu del Satanas,* the less you say about that the better. I was not wont to sport such a costume when rendering Virgil into Castilian, and Las Comedias de Calderon into Latin, in the Arzobispo College at old Salamanca."

[The text in this section is extremely faint and illegible, appearing as a series of horizontal lines.]

"How so?"

"The British troops have not yet begun to cross the frontier into Spain. They are still in quarters."

"Yes."

"You are not going to the French headquarters?"

"No."

"Still monosyllables!" said the Spaniard, impetuously. "I must be plain, I find. You are a deserter!"

"I have said that I am going on duty," replied Quentin, aughtily. "You need question me no further. I am not bound to satisfy the curiosity of every wayfarer I may meet."

"*Morte de Dios!*" swore the Spaniard, with a scowl in his deep eye, and a hand on his stiletto.

"I, too, have arms to repress insolence," said Quentin, grasping his sword.

On this the Spaniard laughed, and said—

"Come—don't let us quarrel. You are a brave boy, and your little breakfast came to me most opportunely. Let us enjoy the present without thinking of the future. *Demonio!* Neither of us may be what we seem. We more often look like spits than words in this world!"

"Senor, excuse me; but I don't understand your proverb."

"It means simply, that all men are not what they seem. To you I appear a *gitano*, a *mendigo*—it may be, a *ladrone*; you appear to me a deserter; so our circumstances may change—you prove the spit, and I the sword."

"Spit again!" said Quentin, angrily, as he conceived there was some sarcasm concealed in the word.

"It is a fable. Listen while I read to you what, I suppose, you never heard before."

And, opening his book, which proved to be the little pocket edition of the quaint old literary fables of Don Tomaso de Yriarte, he rapidly read over the story of the "Spit and Espada."

"Once upon a time there was a rapier of Toledo; a better was never seen in the Alcazar, or tempered in the waters of the Tagus. After having been in many battles, and belonging to many brave cavaliers, by one of the vicissitudes of fortune which lay the greatest low, it came at length to lie forgotten in the corner of a scurvy *posada*."

"There, desirous in vain to breathe a vein and flash once more in battle, it lay long unnoticed and covered with rust, till, by command of her master, a greasy kitchen-wench stuck it through a large capon, and thus forced that which had been a rapier of high renown, arming the hands of the noble and valiant, to degenerate into a mere spit!"

"A student?"

"Perhaps—it was as might be," replied the other, with sudden reserve; "and you are——"

"What you see me."

Quentin gave a portion of his ration-beef and biscuit to the Spaniard, who took them with many thanks, and with an air that showed he was a man of breeding far above what his present *paisano* costume seemed to indicate. His hands were strong, white, and muscular, yet seemed never to have been used to work, and a valuable diamond sparkled in a ring on one of his fingers. In the course of conversation, Quentin could gather that he was remarkably well informed of the strength, number, position, and divisions of the British Army, together with the probable movements towards Castile, thus he felt the necessity of acting with the greatest reserve, and getting rid of him as soon as possible; for the most subtle, wily, and dangerous Spaniards were those in the French interest, which, at first, he feared his new friend to be.

"By my life, *Senor luglese*," said the Spaniard, laughing, "with all this victual in your wallet, 'tis a miracle of our Lady's Cross that the wolves did not come snuffing about you in the night."

"You are a traveller?" observed Quentin, after a pause, during which they had been observing each other furtively.

"I hinted that I had been a student among *Salamanquinos*," replied the Spaniard, coldly.

"And you are now——"

"What the Fiend and the French have made me!" said he, with a lurid gleam in his fine dark eyes.

"And that is——"

"My secret, *senor*," said the other, bluntly, adding "*muchas gracias*," as Quentin smilingly proffered his canteen, the contents of which he declined to taste. "The well of our Blessed Lady will suffice for me," he said, and proceeded to twist up another cigarito. "You are very curious about me, *senor*; but pray what are you?"

"What my uniform declares me," said Quentin, showing the scarlet uniform, which his grey coat had concealed; "a British soldier."

"*Bueno!* Your hand. And whither go you?"

"On duty."

"Where—to whom?"

"That is *my secret*," retorted Quentin, laughing. But a dark expression began to gather in the Spaniard's face, and he looked searchingly at the young volunteer.

"Are you going to the front?" he asked.

"Yes, *senor*."

"Strange!"

"How so?"

"The British troops have not yet begun to cross the frontier into Spain. They are still in quarters."

"Yes."

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"I, too, have arms to repress insolence," said Quentin, grasping his sword.

On this the Spaniard laughed, and said—

"Come—don't let us quarrel. You are a brave boy, and your little breakfast came to me most opportunely. Let us enjoy the present without thinking of the future. *Demonio!* Neither of us may be what we seem. We more often look like spits than swords in this world!"

"Senor, excuse me; but I don't understand your proverb."

"It means simply, that all men are not what they seem. To you I appear a *gitano*, a *mendigo*—it may be, a *ladrone*; you appear to me a deserter; so our circumstances may change—you prove the spit, and I the sword."

"Spit again!" said Quentin, angrily, as he conceived there was some sarcasm concealed in the word.

"It is a fable. Listen while I read to you what, I suppose, you never heard before."

And, opening his book, which proved to be the little pocket edition of the quaint old literary fables of Don Tomaso de Yriarte, he rapidly read over the story of the "Spit and Espada."

"Once upon a time there was a rapier of Toledo; a better was never seen in the Alcazar, or tempered in the waters of the Tagus. After having been in many battles, and belonging to many brave cavaliers, by one of the vicissitudes of fortune which lay the greatest low, it came at length to lie forgotten in the corner of a scurvy posada.

"There, desirous in vain to breathe a vein and flash once more in battle, it lay long unnoticed and covered with rust, till, by command of her master, a greasy kitchen-wench stuck it through a large capon, and thus forced that which had been a rapier of high renown, arming the hands of the noble and valiant, to degenerate into a mere spit!

"About this time, it likewise chanced that a clownish paisano, by the sport of fortune became a hidalgo at court, and as he must needs have a sword, he repaired to the booth of an espadero, who no sooner saw the kind of customer he had to deal with, than he knew that anything having a hilt and scabbard would do, and so desired him to call next day.

"Against the time of his coming he furbished up an old spit that lay in his kitchen, and sold it to our courtier as Tisona, the very same blade with which the Cid Rodrigo of Bivar made the Arabian Khalifs skip at Cordova, and the Moorish dogs at Jaen. Hence we see that the innkeeper was a very great fool, and the espadero a very great rogue."

"And what am I to understand by all this?" asked Quentin, who with some impatience had permitted the Spaniard to read thus far.

"Simply, senor, that though by the vicissitudes of fortune, I seem a spit at present, I may prove in the end a good Toledo blade; for we should never judge solely by appearances;" and pointing to a hole in his sheepskin zamarra, he laughed and added, "Farewell—I go towards the mountains."

"And I towards Spain: I have but two wishes—to reach Herreruela, and to avoid the French in Valencia."

"Truly, they are well and wisely avoided," said the Spaniard through his clenched teeth, while his face became distorted and convulsed by concentrated hate and passion. "Save myself and another, my whole family have perished under their hands. Not even our aged mother was spared, for she died like my helpless old father by their bayonets, on the night that Junot entered Salamanca; and well would it have been if some of the young had suffered the same fate *first*. I had three sisters, senor—three lovelier girls, or three more loving, good, and gentle, God's blessed sun never shone on. Two suffered such wrongs on that night of horrors at Salamanca, that they could not or would not survive them; the youngest, Isidora, happily escaped by being in the convent of Santa Engracia, at Portalegre."

Impressed by the undoubted earnestness of the Spaniard, Quentin said—

"I am bound to the frontier, bearer of a secret despatch."

"To whom?"

"Honour ties my tongue for the present, senor."

"Enough, then; continue to pursue this road for some miles, you will find a branch to the left where it runs parallel with the river Figuero, and leads to Castello de Vide. Proceed straight on and you will come to Marvao; six miles further on is Valencia de Alcantara, garrisoned by the French; cross the river Sever, and a league or so further brings you to Herreruela. Ere long I,

too, shall be there, so we may meet again ; but remember that the whole country swarms with the accursed French, and that your red coat will ensure your captivity or death."

"I shall be wary."

"Be so, or, Santos ! I would not give a *claco* for your life ! Do you see yonder hill ?" asked the Spaniard, pointing to a lofty peak—the highest of the mountain range.

"Yes—a vapour hovers near it."

"I am going there to see what news the eagles have for the loyal Portuguese."

"The eagles !"

"Exactly—but I forget that you are a stranger and don't understand me," replied the other, laughing.

"Adios, senor," said Quentin, preparing to start.

"Adios, senor soldado—adios, vaya !"

The Spaniard pocketed his book of fables, threw his mantle over his left shoulder, grasped his *cajado*, and waving his hat, proceeded to ascend with great activity a steep zigzag path up the mountain side, while Quentin Kennedy pursued his solitary way, which opened into a level district covered with green orange, lemon, and olive groves ; and though the warnings of his late acquaintance did not fail to impress him with anxiety, he felt hopeful that he would achieve in safety and with honour the duty assigned him—escaping the perils that might be set him, and the deadly snare into which Cosmo hoped he might fall.

CHAPTER XLII.

THE MULETEERS.

"Riper occasions well thy valour claim,
Danger comes on ; Typhæus-like it comes,
Whose fabled stature every hour increased."

AQUILRIA—*Old Tragedy.*

WHILE Quentin travelled onward, thinking over his recent meeting at the well, and puzzling himself about the enigma that was probably concealed by the words of the stranger concerning the eagles having news for Portugal, he was roused from his reverie by the jangling of bells, and ere long a string of mules, all sleek, well-fed, of dapple-colour, and in size larger than any he had ever seen, appeared in view, descending with sure and steady steps a narrow rocky path between the olive and orange groves that covered the steep mountain side.

He paused for a moment to permit the string or line, which consisted of twelve mules, to pass along the road in front ; but the

three muleteers in charge, all hardy and sturdy fellows in gaudily, braided and embroidered jackets of purple or olive green cloth—smart sombreros, and gay scarfs, accoutred with ivory-hafted knives and brass-butted pistols, hailed him immediately, asked whither he was going, and courteously, with cries of “Viva los Inglesos! viva el Rey!” offered him a draught of wine from the leathern bota that hung from the neck of Madrina, and in a trice he found himself accompanying them on their way.

Perceiving that he belonged to the British army, they were very inquisitive to know what he was doing there alone, but Quentin had heard that some of those muleteers could make their way from the heart of Castile (then swarming with French troops) to the cantonments of the British army, along the Portuguese frontier, evading all infantry outposts and cavalry patrols by their superior knowledge of the country and its secret paths. He had heard also that they frequently acted as spies and traitors on both sides; thus he deemed extreme reserve necessary, and, with a prudence beyond his years and experience, parried their inquiries, and turned the conversation to general subjects, chiefly the various merits of their mules, which were laden with Indian corn, Oporto wine, pulse, flour, and tobacco; and he failed not, in particular, to extol the beauty of Madrina, a stately old mare, nearly sixteen hands in height, which had round her neck and on her gaudy red and yellow worsted head-gear a row of larger bells than the rest of the train.

The clear sound of those bells being known to them all, they followed her with wonderful instinct, docility, and affection.

So far as he could gather from the conversation, these muleteers were of Old Castile, the principal arriero being Ramon Campillo from Miranda del Ebro; he was a short, thick-set fellow, with a pleasant and sun-burned face, and a beard and head of hair so black and dense that made Quentin think the process of sheep-shearing might, in his instance, have been resorted to with ease and comfort. This shaggy mop he had gathered into a red silk hair-net, over which he wore his hat of coarse brown velvet, adorned by a band and bob of scarlet plush.

These three men carolled and sung as they proceeded along, cracking their whips, indulging in scraps of old warlike ballads, of love-songs and seguidillas, pausing now and then to mutter an *Ave* on passing a cross or a cairn that had some dark story of bloodshed and crime. And many a boast they made of their sunny Castile which France should *never*, NEVER conquer! and many a story they told of the Cid Rodrigo, of our Lady of Zaragoza, the Holy Virgin del Pilar, of miracles and robbers, all pell-mell; but their chief themes were the recent exploits of their

guerilla chiefs, then rising into power; of Don Julian Sanchez with the hare lip, and his glorious Castilian lancers; of El Pastor, the shepherd; El Medico, the doctor; El Manco the cripple; of Don Juan Martin, the Empecinado, who, when his whole family had been murdered by the French, after the ladies of his house had endured horrors worse than death, in the first outburst of his grief, smeared himself with pitch, and vowed never to sheath his sword while a Frenchman remained alive in Spain; and who, when the French nailed a number of patriots to the oaks of the Guadarama, nailed up thrice that number of French soldiers in their place, to fill the forest with their dying groans. With enthusiasm they extolled all those wild spirits whom the war of invasion and independence had brought forth, calling it a *Guerra de moros contra estos infideles!*

But their local hero of heroes seemed to be Don Baltasar de Saldos, whom they described as partly a Cid and partly a devil in his hatred of France and Frenchmen. The mention of his name proved of deep interest to Quentin, and finding him a ready and wondering listener, many were the stories they told of him and of his band, which was composed of Spanish deserters, runaway students, ruined nobles, unfrocked friars, and all manner of wild fellows who loved him with ardour and obeyed him with devotion.

He was the flower of Castilian guerilla chiefs!

"I have seen and heard enough of French atrocity in our peregrinations throughout the kingdoms of Andalusia, Castile, Leon, and Arragon, to make me imbibe somewhat of the same spirit of vengeance that inspires Baltasar de Saldos—aye, Senor, to the full!" said Ramon, in his energy, spitting away the end of his cigarito, and crushing it under his heel.

"In your line one must see much of life," said Quentin.

"Much—maladita! I should think so. I was present in Madrid on the 23rd of last April, when one hundred and twenty defenceless citizens were slaughtered in cold blood by the troops of Murat—shot down by platoons, and for what? Por el Santos de los Santos! only because the epaulettes of his aide-de-camp, the gay Colonel de la Grange, were splashed with mud by some rash students at the gate of Alcala."

"A slight cause, surely."

"But that night, hombre, we had a terrible retribution," said the second muleteer, through his clenched teeth, as he gave a fierce twist to the scarlet silk handkerchief which encircled his head, and the fringed ends of which came from under his sombrero and floated over his shoulders.

"Retribution, Ignacio Noain, I think we had, amigo mio!" replied Ramon, with a bitter laugh; "for it was on that night

Baltasar threw off his student's gown and betook him to knife and musket, and rushed through the streets, shouting, 'Guerra al cuchillo. Salamanquinos!' and 'Viva el Rey de Espana' before the head-quarters of Marshal Murat; and sure vengeance he took, for ere morning the gutters of the Prado were gorged with the blood of more than seven hundred Frenchmen who fell by the muskets and daggers of the loyal Castilians."

"Then," said the third muleteer, with a smiling face and in an encomiastic tone, "it was Baltasar who slew Don Miguel de Saavedra."

"To the devil with him!"

"The traitorous governor of Valencia," added the other two.

"And it was he," said Ramon, "who with his namesake, the Padre Baltasar Calvo, for twelve days and nights followed the fugitive French and Valencian traitors, the tools and followers of Godoy, through the streets, knife in hand, slaying them in cellars, vaults, and bodegas, till the last who was false to Spain had breathed out his dog's life, and his heart, reeking on a bayonet, was thrown on the altar of St. Isidor."

The fiery energy of the speakers, the expression of their dark flashing eyes, the picturesque costumes, the modulation of the grand old language in which they spoke, made those fierce and barbarous recitals doubly striking to Quentin Kennedy, who heard them with something bordering on astonishment, for the English press had no "own correspondents" *then*, to let the people at home know what was enacted abroad.

"Then, senor," said Ignacio Noain, "it was Baltasar de Saldos who suggested the singular death to which the Spanish regiment of Navarre put the timid Italian, Filangheri."

"And this mode of death?" asked Quentin, whom, sooth to say, the grim energy and suddenly developed ferocity of the hitherto jolly muleteers somewhat scared.

"I shall tell you," said Ramon, "for I saw it. You must know, senor soldado, that this Italian was Governor of Corunna and a loyal cavalier to the King; but terrified or hopeless by the overwhelming power of Bonaparte, he showed some signs of wavering, and refused to issue a proclamation of war against the French."

"Might it not have been wisdom to temporize for a time?"

"Santos! this is no time for trifling; so Baltasar rushed among the soldiers of our regiment of Navarre, and incited them to seize the governor at Villa Franca-del-Vierzo, a town on the road which leads from Corunna to Madrid, where they dragged him, almost naked, from the Marquis's palace.

"*'Muera al Filangheri!'* shouted Baltasar to the soldiers;

'unfix your bayonets, plant the ground with them, and toss the traitor in a blanket!'

"With shouts of acclamation at a suggestion so novel, they hastened to do as he suggested. The ground was soon planted thickly with three hundred bayonets, their sockets fixed in the earth, their sharp points upwards. The breathless governor, pale and imploring mercy, was tossed thrice into the air from a blanket, as dogs are tossed on Shrove Tuesday. After the third toss, the blanket was withdrawn, and the hapless Filangheri fell crash on the bayonets. He was impaled in every part of his body at once; after this, leaving him miserably to die, the soldiers dispersed to join Baltasar's band of guerillas in the mountains of Herrerueta; but this destruction of a king's officer caused Sir John Moore to deem him false to Ferdinand VII."

"How horrible is all this!" exclaimed Quentin.

"Desperate times and men, require desperate hearts and stern measures, said the muleteer Ramon, as he slung his long musket—which no doubt had a goodly charge of slugs in its barrel—and took a guitar which hung at the collar of one of his mules. "But we must not scare you, senor Inglese, as we shall surely do, if we talk longer thus; so now for something more cheerful;" and he began at once to sing, with a very mellow voice, a little romance, in which his companions joined with much laughter, and which began thus,—

"Tiempo es el Caballero,
The world will all divine;
Now my girdle is too narrow,
They'll see my shame—and thine!

"Tiempo es el Caballero—
When the maids my garments bring,
I see them wink and nod their heads,
I hear them tittering."*

"We have come from Arronches and are going to Castello Branco, in Lower Beira, along the Portuguese frontier," said Ramon, "and yonder is the puebla at which we are to halt," he added, pointing to a few ruined walls that bordered the highway.

"What walled town is that on the hill, with an old castle?" asked Quentin.

"About two leagues beyond?"

"Yes."

"That is Castello de Vide, famous for its cloth factory."

"Castello de Vide—good Heavens, senores arrieros, your pleasant society has lured me out of my proper way."

* Poetry of Spain.

"I am sorry to hear it," said Ramon, drily.

"I should have gone to the right."

"Madre de Dios!"

"To the right?"

"Towards the French lines?"

Such were the exclamations of the muleteers as their frowns deepened.

"I should have gone somewhat in that direction, at all events," said Quentin, reddening with the annoyance and confusion natural to an honourable person when viewed with mistrust.

"Senor Inglese, in what capacity, or for what purpose are you travelling on foot alone, and in this suspicious fashion, towards the outposts of General de Ribeaupierre, the commander in Valencia?" asked the mul-teeer Ramon, sternly, as he drew himself up, and proceeded very deliberately to examine the flint and priming of his long musket.

"By what right do you ask?" demanded Quentin, whose heart beat tumultuously at the prospect of being butchered far from help or justice.

"Take your hand from your pistol—dare you question us, senor—one to three?"

"Yes, I do—by what right do you molest me?"

"The right of loyal and true Castilians," replied the three muleteers, with one voice, as the other two, who had not yet spoken, unslung their bell mouthed trabucos or blunderbusses, and all their faces assumed that very formidable scowl, which appears nowhere so grimly as in the dark and sallow visages of those sons of old Iberia.

Now ensued a brief, but somewhat unpleasant and exciting pause; and finding that matters had come to this dangerous pass with him, Quentin, on reflection, drew forth his sealed missive, and showing the address to Ramon, said:

"I am the bearer of this despatch from Lieutenant-General Sir John Hope, to Don Baltasar de Saldos, the guerilla chief, and if you are loyal Spaniards, as you say, you will put up those weapons, and direct me by the nearest and safest route to the hills near Herrerueta."

"Oh, par todos Santos, but this alters the case entirely!" said Ramon, as they relinquished their weapons, wreathed their grim fronts with sudden smiles, and cordially shook hands with him.

"Why did you not tell us all this at first?" asked the muleteer Ignacio Noain.

"Well, even Madrina, I suppose, does not like to be sharply

taken by the bridle," said Quentin, smiling, and feeling considerably, relieved in his mind.

"No more does she, the old beauty, she would lash out at her own madre. You have somewhat overshot the way, senor, for a mile or two along the Figuero; however, you shall not leave us yet awhile. Dine with us at the old puebla—the French have not left many stones of it together. Ay de mi! it was a jovial place once; many a bolero and fandango I have danced with the girls here, and where are they all now? We have only bacallao (dried ling) and biscuits, with a mouthful of good wine—real vino de Alicante—to offer you."

"Thanks, senores, but evening is almost at hand."

"It will be nightfall when you reach the base of yonder mountain," said Ramon, pointing to a lofty hill, whose granite brows were all empurpled by the sunshine; "there Gil Llano, a poor vinedresser, lives—a Portuguese, who for my sake, if not for your own, will gladly give you shelter; be sure, however, to show him this."

With these words, Ramon disengaged from one of the four dozen of brass bell buttons, with which his jacket was adorned, one of the many consecrated copper medals that hung thereat, and placed it in Quentin's hand, just as they entered the ill-fated puebla (village), which was totally roofless and ruined. Fragments of charred furniture, broken crocks, cans, and plates strewed the now untrodden street, where the grass was springing. The broad leaved vines grew wild about the crumbling walls and open windows; and a rude cross here and there marked the hastily made graves of the slaughtered villagers.

There, as elsewhere, the wings of the Imperial Eagle, like those of a destroying angel, had spread desolation and death!

"When," asked the poor Portuguese, in one of their manifestoes after the horrors of Coimbra, "did the laws of man authorize the outrage of women, the slaughter of aged and other defenceless inhabitants of places which made no resistance; the assassination of men who were accounted rich, only because they could not furnish that quantity of treasure of which it was said they were possessed?"

Halting by the old village well, the muleteers attended first to the wants of Madrina and her sleek companions.

"*Arre, arre*, old woman," said Ramon, "thou shalt have a deep cool draught at last; *arre, arre!*"

This is an old Moorish term (literally gee-up), whence the muleteers are familiarly termed *arrieros*. They then shared with Quentin their dried fish and hard biscuits, with a few olives and luscious oranges, that had become golden among the groves that

cast their shadows, on the Ebro; and they frequently patted him on the shoulder, and expressed regret for their suspicions, and the mischief these might have led to.

The group around this lonely well, which bubbled through a grotesque stone face, under an old Roman arch, and the scene around, were wonderfully striking and picturesque.

In the immediate foreground were the swarthy Castilian muleteers in their gaudy dress, and their gaily trapped mules, all resting on the bright green sward; close by was the ruined puebla; northward rose Castello de Vide in the distance on its verdant hill, the round towers of its ancient fortress and ruined walls, that had more than once withstood the tide of Moorish and Castilian chivalry; to the east and south rose the great sierras that form the boundary between Spain and Portugal, all crimsoned with the light of the gorgeous sun that was setting in gold and saffron behind the cork-tree groves that clothe the hills of St. Mames.

The frugal repast was barely over when the tinkle of a clear and silvery bell that rung in some solitary hermitage, concealed afar off among the chestnut woods in some hollow of the mountains, came at intervals on the evening wind.

"Vespers," said Ramon Campillo, taking off his sombrero; "amigos mios, to prayers."

Then, with a simple devotion that impressed him deeply, Quentin Kennedy saw those sturdy and jovial, but rather reckless fellows, who, but a few minutes before, were (we are compelled to admit it) quite disposed to knock him on the head, kneel down and pray very earnestly for a minute or so.

A few minutes more saw them on their way to Castello de Vide, and him progressing towards the mountains. They waved their hats to him repeatedly, and then as the twilight deepened, the breeze of the valley as it swept over the odorous orange groves brought pleasantly to his ear the jingle of the mule-bells, and the tinkle of Ramon's guitar dying away in the distance, with a verse of the song the three arrieros sung—an old Valencian evening hymn.

"Thou who all our sins didst bear,
All our sorrows suffering there,
O *Agnus Dei!*
Lead us where thy promise led
That poor dying thief who said,
Memento mei!"

CHAPTER XLIII.

GIL LLANO.

"Still, however fate may thwart me,
Unconvinced, unchanged I live;
From those dreams I cannot part me,
That such dear delusions give;
Hoping yet in countless years,
One bright day unstained with tears."

RODRIGUEZ LOBO.

THE outrages of the French invaders in Spain and Portugal were doubtless of the worst description; but those reprisals which the patriots were not slow in making were equal in atrocity. The stories he had heard of these shook Quentin's confidence in his own safety, and in his powers mental and physical; they caused him to regard with something of suspicion, repugnance, and mistrust the dwellers in the land, and to wish himself well out of it, or at least safe once more under the colours of the Old Borderers.

He remembered the intense bitterness, the momentary but clamorous anxiety caused by his late episode, and how keenly the foretasted agony of death entered his soul, when the three muleteers threatened him with their weapons, and when there seemed every prospect of his falling by their hand in that mountain solitude, and being left there dead to the wolves; his fate and story alike unknown to all who might feel the slightest interest therein. He remembered all this, we say, that he had no desire to endure such an agony again.

He felt his isolation, his helplessness in many respects, and longed anxiously for the end of his task, and for the society of his comrades and friends, of Askerne, Middleton, and others by whom he was esteemed and trusted.

This very anxiety made him quicken his pace, and thus about an hour after parting from the muleteers at the puebla, he saw a light twinkling on the roadway at the base of the dark green mountain; then, after passing under some half-ruined trellis where the vines were carefully trained and made a leafy tunnel, he reached the dwelling of Gil Llano (pronounced Yano) the vine-dresser, a wayside cottage, with a few smaller adjuncts where the galinas roosted and the porkers snorted.

He knocked at the door, which was slowly opened after some delay, and after he had been reconnoitred by a pair of keen black eyes through an eyelet hole; then the proprietor, a swarthy

stout little Portuguese, black bearded and snub-nosed, appeared with a bare knife clenched between his teeth and a cocked musket in his hands, to demand who was there.

"*Quien es?*" he asked, angrily.

"*Genie de puez,*" replied Quentin, in a conciliating tone.

"*Pho!*" indeed—your dress doesn't say you are a man of peace."

"I am a British soldier travelling on duty," said Quentin.

"How can I as-ist you, senor?"

"The muleteer, Ramon Campillo, of Miranda del Ebro, who is now on his way to Castello Branco, informed me that you are a loyal Portuguese——"

"None more loyal!" responded the other, slapping the butt of his musket.

"I was to show you this medal, and, if not intruding, remain with you for the night."

"Ramon is my good friend," said the Portuguese, carefully looking at the brass medal, which bore the image of St. Elizabeth, "and this was my gift to him. You are welcome, senor, to such poor accommodation as the French have left me to offer."

The Portuguese conducted Quentin into his cottage, the interior of which, by its squalor and poverty, showed that poor Gil Llano's circumstances had not been improved by the influences of the war.

A candle, in a clay-holder, flickered on the bare table, an iron brasero, full of charcoal and dry leaves, smouldered on the hearth; above the mantelpiece were a little stucco Madonna and some gaudy little Lisbon prints of holy personages, such as St. Anthony of Portugal, with his beloved pig; St. Elizabeth the queen, who died at Estremoz in 1336; St. Ignatius Loyola, and others in scarlet and blue drapery, with golden halos, all pasted on the whitewashed wall.

The cottage appeared to consist of three or four small apartments, all roofed with large red tiles, through the holes in which Quentin could see the stars shining, and suggesting an idea of umbrellas in case of rain. The rafters were thickly hung with bunches of dried raisins, by the sale of which to the passing muleteers and contrabandistas, Gil and his family subsisted. But even this humble place bore traces of the retreating French. One of the little windows had been dashed to pieces by a musket-butt, and most of the woodwork had gone for fuel when Junot's voltigeurs bivouacked among the vine trellis, half of which they tore down and destroyed.

Poor Gil Llano, whose whole attire consisted of a zamarra, a

pair of red cotton breeches, a yellow sash, and the net which confined his hair, made Quentin Kennedy heartily welcome, and spoke with enthusiasm and gratitude of the British, who had swept Portugal of the French; and he exulted about the recent battle of Vimiera, which he had witnessed from the Torres Vedras, where, he frankly admitted, he had hovered among the cork-trees, and, with his musket, had "potted" successfully some of Ribeaupierre's dragoons as they fell back in disorder before the furious advance of General Anstruther's column.

Quentin soon found himself at home, and shared with Llano's family the supper of ham and eggs, cooked in a crock between the brasero and one of the stones of Antas, which are supposed, when once heated, to continue so for two days. He might have excused the flavour of garlic, but found an Abrantes melon sliced with sugar, and a flask of Oporto wine, very acceptable.

The half-clad mother and her meagre, dark-skinned brood, with their large black eyes, he could perceive regarded him as a heretic and soldier, doubtfully, even fearfully, and askance—an English heretic being always associated, in the minds of Peninsula people, with priestly denunciations and the *autos de fe* of the Holy Office in its palmy days. However, after a time, as he manifested no desire to eat any of the children, but bestowed upon them all he could afford—a handful of half-vintins, part of the poor quartermaster's parting gift—confidence became established, and little bare-legged Pedrillo crept close to his knee; Babieta peeped slyly at him from behind her mother's skirts, and, when he hung Ramon's brass medal round the tawny neck of Gil, the nursing, the goodwoman Llano's heart opened to him at once.

Perceiving that Quentin was so young, she asked, while her dark eyes filled with a tender expression, if his mother sorrowed for him, and if she had many other sons, that she could spare him; adding that, after all she had seen of war, she would rather die than permit either of her boys to become soldiers, even to fight for Portugal.

"Ere long Portugal shall have stronger hands than we could furnish to fight for her," said Gil, confidently. "No miracle the blessed saints of heaven have ever worked has been half so wonderful as these marvellous and prophetic eggs that have been found by Don Julian Sanchez, by El Pastor, the Alcalde of Portalegre and others, in the nests among the mountains. True it is, senor," he continued, on perceiving Quentin's glance of inquiry and surprise, "that eggs have been found laid in the mountains by the birds of the air—eggs bearing inscriptions which foretell that as Portugal has been deserted at her utmost need by the

House of Braganza, our brave old king, Don Sebastian, of pious and glorious memory, will come to protect and rule over us again."

"Don Sebastian," said Quentin, who had heard this farrago of words with some wonder; "how long is it ago since he was king?"

Gil reckoned on his brown fingers, and then said—

"About two hundred and thirty years."

"How—what?" exclaimed Quentin, thinking that he had not heard aright.

"Exactly, senor; he was taken—some say killed—in battle by the Moorish dogs at the battle of Alcazal-quiver, on the coast of Fez, in 1578; but his restoration to us is certain now."

"And *eggs*, do you say have prophesied this?"

"By the soul of St. Anthony of Lisbon, yes! The miraculous legends written on their shells told us so. I saw one with my own eyes as it lay on the altar of the Estrella convent where it had been brought by the Marquis d'Almeida, who found it on the mountain of Cintra."

"And you read the legend?"

"No, senor—I cannot read; moreover, it was written in old Latin."

"By whom, Senor Gil?"

"God and St. Anthony only know," replied Gil, crossing himself after dipping his fingers in a little clay font of *agua-bendita* that hung beside the mantelpiece.

Now Quentin remembered the words of the stranger whom he had met by the wayside cross, and whom he had last seen toiling up the mountain with the aid of his staff, as he alleged, in search of eagles' nests. He had some trouble to preserve his gravity, and probably nothing enabled him to do so but his wonder at the perfect simplicity and the good faith of this Portuguese peasant in the return of Lusitania's long-lost hero.

On inquiring further, he learned, for the first time, that there still existed in Portugal the sect called of old "Sebastianists," fondly cherishing a belief that their crusader king (who fell in battle against Muley Moloc) was detained in an enchanted island, where he was supernaturally preserved; and that they also cherished a belief that he would reappear with all his *valadins* to deliver Lusitania when at her utmost need!

Portugal's utmost need had come and gone; Roleia and Vimiera had been fought and won by Sir Arthur Wellesley; but still the Sebastianists believed in the ultimate return and intervention of their favourite hero, and eggs marked by the more cunning with some chemical agency, bearing legends foretelling the event, were opportunely found and exhibited: a puerile

trick, which Marshal Junot, General de Ribeaupierre, and others soon contrived to turn against the inventors; for *other* eggs bearing mottoes of very different import were frequently found in the same places.

A belief similar to that of the Sebastianists long lingered among the Scots relative to their beloved James IV., who fell at Flodden; among the Germans regarding Frederick Barbarossa, who filled all Asia with the terror of his name, and died on the banks of the Cydnus; among the Britons concerning their fabulous Arthur of the Round Table; and among the ancient Irish concerning some now unknown warrior named Dharra Dheeling. But it was left for the poor Portuguese to be among the last to console themselves under defeat and disaster with such delusive hopes; and thus in the year of Vimiera, "many people," says General Napier, "and those not of the most uneducated classes, were often observed upon the highest points of the hills, casting earnest looks towards the ocean, in the hopes of descrying the enchanted island in which their long-lost hero was detained."

CHAPTER XLIV.

DANGER IN THE PATH.

"Beloved of glory, Spain! hail, holy ground!
 All hail! thou chosen scene of deeds renown'd,
 By warriors wrought in each progressive age,
 Who struggled to repel th' oppressor's rage.
 Tell thou the world how on thy favoured coast,
 Our Wellesley fought, and Gaul her sceptre lost."

Roncesvalles—a Poem.

PROCEEDING eastward next morning, Quentin was guided by Gil Llano for some miles towards the Spanish frontier. To avoid all chance of being seen by cavalry or foraging parties, the officers commanding which were sometimes really ignorant rather than oblivious of the actual line of demarcation between Spain and Portugal, the worthy vinedresser conducted him by unfrequented but steep and devious mountain paths, which left far on their right flank the little town and fortress of Marvao, that lies in the Comarca of Portalegre, and as they were now within six miles of Valencia de Alcantara, which was the head-quarters of Ribeaupierre's cavalry brigade, the utmost circumspection was necessary.

The morning was one of singular loveliness; the white mists were rolling up the green mountain sides from the greener valleys below, and there was a peculiar freshness and fragrance in the atmosphere which made Quentin feel buoyant and happy, for a

time at least; the sun was high in heaven, the dew was glittering on every herb and tree, and the mountain scenery looked bright and glorious.

The blood of our soldiers who fell at Roleia and Vimiera had not been shed in vain for Portugal. Already signs of peace were visible in her valleys and towns, and all was in repose along her frontier. Thus Quentin could hear the lowing of oxen and the bleating of sheep come pleasantly on the morning wind that passed over the green sierra, bearing with it the odour of the orange groves in the valley and of the flowering arbutus that bordered the way.

In a hollow of the hills, Llano showed Quentin a lake, on the borders of which some of the miraculous eggs had been found by Baltasar de Saldos in a cypress grove; and he alleged that its waters had the power of swallowing or sucking into the bowels of the earth whatever was thrown therein, consequently not a leaf, or reed, or lotus was to be seen floating there.

"But its power, *senor*, is a mere joke when compared with that of the lake of Cedima, which lies about eight leagues from Coimbra, and which instantly swallows up the largest logs and trees, if cast therein."

"Is there a whirlpool in the centre?" asked Quentin.

"Saints and angels only know what is in the centre; but in my father's days—he was a farmer, *senor*, in the Quinta das Lagrimas—there came a Danish cavalier who refused to credit the story, and offered, mockingly, to cross the lake on horseback, in presence of the *Juiz-de-fora*, the Reformer of the University, the *Alcalde* of the city, and all the great lords of Coimbra.

"After hearing the bishop (who is always *Conde de Arganuil*) say mass in the church of Santa Cruz, and after partaking of the Holy Communion before the altar there, he mounted his horse, and, in presence of a vast multitude, proceeded to the lake of Cedima. Then when he saw its black and ominous water that lay without a ripple in the sunshine, his heart somewhat failed him, and lest the story of the lake might be true, and lest his life might indeed be lost, on perceiving a great stake, or the trunk of an old chestnut tree near the edge, he tied a thick rope to it, securing the other end to his right leg. Another rope of similar strength he tied to the neck of his horse, a fine Spanish gennet, and giving him the spur, he uttered a shout and plunged headlong into the water.

"A little way the horse swam snorting, and then began to sink; ere long his ears alone were visible! Then they too disappeared; the water bubbled above his nostrils as his head went down; then the dark water flowed over the rider's shoulders—

then over his head, and while a cry of dismay rose from the terrified people, the steed and the stranger vanished together and were seen no more."

"So the ropes proved of no service?" said Quentin.

"The one that was about the neck of the horse was snapped right through the centre: but at the end of the other was found the right leg of the unfortunate Dane, torn off by the thigh, doubtless as the downward current whirled him into the vortex; and so from that day a belief in the waters of Cedima has been stronger than ever in Portugal."

"After the marvellous eggs and the enchanted island, I can easily think so," said Quentin.

When worthy Gil Llano (who expressed a hope to see him again if he returned that way) had left him, with the information that from the top of the next hill he would see Spain and the spires of Valencia de Alcantara, Quentin proceeded all the more rapidly that he was now alone, and his steps kept pace with the busy current of his thoughts.

His whole ideas of the duty on which he had been sent were somewhat vague. He had but three instructions given him; first, to avoid Valencia (which the reader must not confound with the capital of the kingdom of the same name); second, to reach Herrerueta how he best could; third, to deliver his despatch; and for the execution of this he had been sent from Portalegre unsupplied either with money or credentials of any Alcalde, Juiz-de-fora, or other civil or military authority, in case of any difficulty arising.

There were times—and this was one—when Quentin felt as if he were again at Rohallion—at his home, for such he felt it to be—relating all these adventures to those who were now there; to the kind and soldier-like old Lord; to the courteous and gentle Lady Winifred; to the old quartermaster, with his kind red face and yellow wig, while Mr. Spillsby the butler and Jack Andrews loitered near to listen; to the dominie, with his rusty blacks, his square shoe-buckles, and his musty memories of the classics; and more than all, to Flora Warrender!

And then, with these thoughts, there seemed to come to his ears the pleasant rustle of the aged sycamores as the west wind shook their branches, the cawing of the black rooks on the old grey keep, the rush of the Lollards' Linn pouring under its arch and over its ledge of rock; and to his fancy's eye the sierras of Portugal gave place to the brown hills of Carrick, the distant Craigs of Kyle, and "the bonnie blooming heather," or the waves of the Clyde as they boiled in foam over the Partan Craig and climbed the dark headland of Rohallion.

So the past returned and the present fled !

Amid those cherished scenes he had long since left his happy boyhood. Now he felt himself, as we have said, every inch a soldier and a man, inspired by a sense of duty, of trust, and not a little by the love of adventure natural to youth. The inborn ambition which the solid weight of his knapsack and accoutrements, and all his sufferings when on the march from Maciera Bay, had somewhat chilled ; the high spirit that Cosmo's hatred and cutting coldness had striven to crush, both sprang up anew in his buoyant heart, and he felt it glowing with hope, energy, and enthusiasm ; and now, when he had reached the summit of the mountain over which the road passed, and on issuing from a narrow rocky defile, saw a vast extent of open country beyond, a glorious and fertile landscape, all vibrating apparently in the rays of the cloudless sun, he waved his cap and almost cried "hurrah !" for he knew that he looked down on——Spain !

Before him, as on a map, he saw the vast extent of Spanish Estremadura stretching into distance far away, all steeped in a lovely golden glow, the almost universal verdure of the landscape relieved here and there by the water of the Salor and other minor tributaries of the Tagus, winding like blue silk threads through velvet of emerald green, dotted by thickets of chestnut, orange, and cork trees ; and there, too, were the strong embattled towers and the spires of Valencia de Alcantara, with the tricolour on its greatest bastion ; and in the distance, half hid in saffron haze, through which they loomed in purple tint, the ramparts of Albuquerque, on its steep hill, the heritage of the Condes de Ledesma. Between these cities lay a little puebla, which he knew must be San Vincente, near, but not through which, lay his path to the hills that overlooked the plain.

Thoughts of the poetry, of the beauty, and romance of Spain came thronging on his memory, and we must confess they formed an odd chaos of cloaked cavaliers with guitars and rapiers ; dark-eyed donnas in balconies, fluttering fans and veils ; lurking rivals, with mask and dagger ; mountain robbers in high-crowned hats, with their legs swathed in red bandages, after the orthodox fashion of all melo-dramatic banditti. These, together with the solid splendour and wonderful stories of the Alhambra, the wars of the high-spirited Moors of Granada, ending so sadly in *el suspiro del Moro*, when the warriors of Ferdinand and Isabella rent the banner of the Prophet from the weak hand of Boabdil el Chico, not unnaturally made up his stock ideas of the sunny land he looked upon.

But it was the land of the Cid Campeador—he at whose name the eyes of even the most unlettered Spaniard will lighten—for

he was the veritable and redoubtable Wallace of Castile against the enemies of Christianity and the Christian's God. Such memories as these rushed on Quentin's mind as he looked down on Estremadura; nor could he forget, though last not least, that it was the native land of him "who laughed Spain's chivalry away"—the illustrious Cervantes, the one-handed soldier of Lepanto.

A distant but unmistakable sound of musketry reverberating among the mountain peaks on his left, roused him somewhat unpleasantly from his dream, bringing him all at once from the romance of the past to the reality of present Spanish life.

Several shots he heard distinctly pealing through the air; others followed, and after an interval, two dropping shots, but at a greater distance, as if they proceeded from some flying skirmishers. Then all became still, and he heard only the voices of the birds as they wheeled aloft in the sunshine or twittered among the arbutus leaves.

The road, a narrow and rugged path now as it descended, passed through a dark grove of wild pines; on issuing from which Quentin's nerves received somewhat of a shock on seeing a French light dragoon, in pale green uniform, lying on his back quite dead, with the foam of past agony on his lips, and the blood of a recent wound till oozing from his left temple, through which a musket shot had passed. Crushed, apparently by a horse's hoof, his light brass helmet lay beside him. A few yards off lay another *chasseur à cheval*, and further off still lay a third, who seemed to have been dragged some distance by his horse ere his foot had been disengaged from the stirrup, for a bloody and dusty track was visible from where Quentin stood to where the *chasseur* lay.

Quentin paused, for his heart beat wildly, and instinctively he looked to the flints and pans of his pistols, his hands trembling as he did so—with an excitement justifiable in one so young—but *not* with fear.

These three unfortunates were the first Frenchmen—the first slain—and, in fact (save the dead gipsy in the vault of Kilhenzie), they were the *first* dead men he had looked upon; thus he glanced timidly, and while his heart swelled with pity, from one to the other.

There they were, three smart and handsome young men, clad in showy light cavalry uniforms, each perhaps a mother's pride and father's hope, left dead and abandoned to the ravens, in that wild place, with their white faces and glazed eyes staring stonily at the glorious noonday sun, while the little birds came hopping and twittering about them.

Quentin's gentle soul was stirred within him; he was new to this butcherly work, and war seemed wicked indeed! Those three rigid figures—those three pale faces with fallen jaws, and those bloody wounds, made a scaring and terrible impression upon him; but as he continued hastily to descend the hill, and left them behind, he foresaw not the callous heart and time that use and wont would bring.

CHAPTER XLV.

THE CHASSEUR À CHEVAL.

"The soldier little quiet finds,
But is exposed to stormy winds,
And weather."—L'ESTRANGE.

AFTER proceeding a little way, the sound of voices, as if engaged in fierce altercation, made him pause and look round warily, pistol in hand. He drew behind a gigantic Portuguese cypress that overshadowed the way, and on reconnoitring, discovered two men engaged in a fierce and deadly struggle. They were a French cavalry officer and a Spanish guerilla.

The Frenchman was almost in rags, for his silver epaulettes and green uniform, covered with elaborate braiding, had been torn in his conflict with the Spaniard, for, as they grappled, they rolled over each other down a gravelly bank into the dry bed of mountain stream, where they only paused to draw breath before renewing the contest, in which the guerilla was apparently getting the mastery. He had a broadbladed dagger in his sash; but, as the Frenchman held his wrists with a death-clutch, he was unable to use it.

"Ah, sacré Dieu!" cried the officer, on whose breast the knees of the guerilla were pressed without mercy; "I will yield on the promise of quarter—even from you."

"Dog of a Frenchman! May thy foot be heavy on my neck if I spare thee!" was the hoarse and fierce response of the Spaniard, in whom Quentin, with considerable interest, recognised his friend of the wayside cross, whom he last saw going bird-nesting up the mountains in search of the miraculous eggs.

"Espanole," said the Frenchman, in tones of rage and entreaty mingled, "would you kill a defenceless and unarmed man?"

"Why not, if he is French? Who slew my aged father? Who slew my mother—my sisters—all—all? Who deluged our home with blood, and desolated it with fire?"

"Not I—not I—spare me," exclaimed the Frenchman, as he

felt his strength failing him fast; "my mother, Spaniard—hound!—ah, ma mère—ma mère—mon Dieu!" he added, with a hopeless groan; and these two French words stirred some deep, keen chord, some long-forgotten memory in the heart of Quentin, who felt his temples throbbing.

"Maledita! the strife of our forefathers is but renewed," continued the Spaniard, in his noble and forcible Castilian, through his clenched teeth, while his eyes flashed fire, and his moustaches seemed to bristle; "it is a war to the knife against dogs and infidels, for what are Frenchmen but dogs and infidels, even as the Moors were of old?"

Again, without avail, the hapless chasseur pleaded for his life; but the more powerful conqueror heard him to an end, and then laughed exultingly.

"I am guiltless of all, of everything but doing my duty," he urged.

"Duty!" repeated the other; "shall I tell you of our pillaged altars and desecrated churches, of ruined cities and desolated villages; shall I tell you of our slaughtered brethren, our outraged wives, sisters, and ladies of the holy orders, some of whom have been bound to gun-carriages, stripped, and exposed in the common streets and plazas? Par Dios! these things are enough to call down Heaven's thunder on the head of your accursed Corsican!"

"Ah, morbleu!" gasped the Frenchman, "what a devil of a savage it is! Peste! I assure you, monsieur, I have never touched even the tip of a woman's hand since I had the misfortune to cross the Pyrenees. Tudieu! the Emperor finds us other work and other things to think of."

By a violent wrench the Spaniard now got his right hand free, and in an instant, like a gleam of light, his long knife glittered as he upheld it at arm's length above the poor young Frenchman, whose pale face and dark eyes assumed a most despairing aspect.

Quentin could no longer look on unmoved.

"Hold—hold!" he exclaimed, and sprang towards them threateningly.

"Oho, amigo mio," said the Spaniard, looking round with a saturnine smile; "'tis my friend of the laurel bushes—the spit that looked like a sword."

"Hold, I say, Spaniard—would you murder him in cold blood?"

"Demonio, yes; and you, too, if you would protect a soldier of the false Corsican. Begone, and leave us, or it may be the worse for you."

"I shall not."

"Maledita!" said the Spaniard, grinding his teeth, and clutching the throat of the fallen man.

"Release him, I say," demanded Quentin, resolutely.

"Vaya usted con cien mill demonios," (Begone with a hundred thousand devils), said the Spaniard absolutely, gnashing his strong white teeth, which glistened beneath his black moustache.

"Oh, sauvez moi, mon camarade," implored the poor Frenchman.

"Thus, then, die—die en el santo nombre de Dios!"

With this impious shout, the furious guerilla, or whatever he was, raised the dagger which he had lowered for a moment; but ere it could descend, Quentin, with lightning speed, snatched up the heavy cajado which lay at his feet, and, loth to use a more deadly weapon against a Spaniard, struck the guerilla a blow on the head and rolled him over. A heavy malediction escaped him, and then he lay motionless and still, completely stunned.

Breathless with his recent struggle and its terrors, the French officer lost no time in springing to his feet.

"A thousand thanks to you, monsieur! But for you—there—there had been a vacancy in my troop to-night. But here—come this way; we have not a moment to lose, for the hills are full of these guerillas. Peste! they are as thick as bees hereabout; and believe me, the men of Baltasar de Saldos are not to be trifled with."

As the Frenchman spoke, he seized Quentin by the sleeve, and half led, half dragged him through the grove of pines; after which, they ran down hill for more than a mile, till they reached the main-road that led directly to Valencia the lesser, when Quentin paused, and began to reflect that he was going very oddly about the deliverance of Sir John Hope's despatch, a document that probably announced the day on which the entire army would break up from its cantonments and advance into Spain!

CHAPTER XLVI.

EUGÈNE DE RIBEAUPIERRE.

"Ford. Well, he's not here I seek for.

Page. No, nor nowhere else but in your brain.

Ford. Help me to search my house this one time: if I find not what I seek, show me no colour for my extremity, let me for ever be your table sport; let them say of me, 'As jealous as Ford, that searched hollow walnuts for his wife's leman.'"*—Merry Wives of Windsor.*

QUENTIN KENNEDY was only master of a certain amount of the Spanish language, which he had rapidly acquired through the

medium of his friend the dominie's sonorous Scottish latinity; but fortunately the young Frenchman, who seemed to be highly accomplished, spoke English with remarkable fluency.

His uniform, we have said, was in rags; his epaulettes had gone in the recent struggle, the straps of lace for retaining them on the shoulders alone remained. A hole in the breast of his light green jacket showed where the gold Cross of the Legion had been rent away by some guerilla's hand, and the state of his scarlet pantaloons made one see the advantage of wearing a kilt for pugnacious casualties, as they were now reduced to mere shreds.

He was a slender young man, in appearance only a year or two older than Quentin, though really many years his senior in experience of the world and of life generally. His hair, which he wore in profusion, was dark brown and silky, and his hands, on one of which sparkled a splendid ring, were white and almost ladylike. An incipient moustache shaded his short upper lip; his features were very regular, and he was so decidedly good-looking, that Quentin could not help thinking that if he had a sister like him, she must be charming!

They quitted the highway and entered a dense thicket by the wayside, where, breathless, hot, and weary, they cast themselves on the cool deep grass that grew under the leafy shade, and the last of the contents of Quentin's canteen, divided between them, proved very acceptable to both.

"I perceive that you are a French officer," said Quentin; "may I ask whom I have had the honour of succouring?"

"Certainly, mon camarade; I am a sous-lieutenant of my father's regiment, the 24th Chasseurs à Cheval—my name is Eugène de Ribeaupierre."

"Any relation of the general who commands in Valencia?"

"A very near one," said he, laughing; "I am his son, and monsieur's very obedient servant. Come! let us rest ourselves and talk a little. The tap on the head you gave that Spaniard was most critical and serviceable to me."

"True—it only came just in time!"

"I hope it may have despatched him outright."

"I trust not, now that the end was accomplished."

"Now that we have breathing time, you will perhaps excuse my little curiosity, and say how you came to be here, within two or three miles of our sentinels?"

"The country is quite open," said Quentin, evasively, with a smile.

"Your troops, we have heard, are closing up from Lisbon and elsewhere; but have *not* as yet been rash enough to enter Spain, the territories of King Joseph."

"Rash, monsieur?"

"Peste! I suppose your generals have not forgotten the sharp lessons we taught them at Roleia and Vimiera?"

Quentin laughed to hear the pleasant tone in which the Frenchman spoke of two very important defeats of the Emperor's troops as "lessons" to the British, but he said plainly enough,

"I am here because I was sent on duty."

"To whom, monsieur?"

Quentin hesitated.

"Nay, out with it, man—trust me, on my honour—I may well pledge it to one who has saved me from a barbarous death within the hour, and earned my warmest gratitude."

"Well, then, I go to Don Baltasar de Saldos."

"Diable! the man's a guerilla chief, and we have just had a severe brush with his people. My patrol, consisting of a sergeant, a corporal, and twelve chasseurs, were riding leisurely along the road from San Vincente towards the summit of yonder mountain, when, from a grove of cork and cypress trees, there flashed out some twenty muskets. It was an ambush; the leading section of them fell dead; the rest broke through, sabre à la main, and fled, pursued by the guerillas, who sprang after them with the yells of fiends and the activity of squirrels, leaping from bank to rock, and from rock to tree, firing and reloading so long as we were in range. Struck by a ball in the counter, my horse reared wildly up, and threw me; for some minutes I was insensible, and on recovering, found myself in the paws of yonder Spanish bear, who was thrice my bulk and strength. You know the rest. I thought it was all up with me. As Francis said at Pavia, 'tout est perdu, sauf l'honneur!' Baltasar's head-quarters are in a mountain puebla near Herrerueta, where he successfully defies my father's cavalry. Am I right in supposing that you have been sent to invite his co-operation in some projected movement?"

"My orders were simply to deliver to him a despatch and rejoin my regiment."

"It is a dangerous and desperate errand, my friend," said the young Frenchman, while regarding Quentin with some interest; "I mean desperate to be undertaken by one alone. It looks almost like a sacrifice of you!"

"A sacrifice?" repeated Quentin, as his thoughts naturally wandered to Cosmo.

"Parbleu, yes—to the exigencies of the service."

"Some of my friends were not slow in saying as much," replied Quentin; "but then I—I am only a volunteer, and as such, must take any hazardous duty, I have been told."

"Well, here we must lurk till nightfall—you to avoid our patrols, which are usually withdrawn for a few hours after the evening gun fires, when the inlying picket get under arms; I to avoid those pestilent guerillas. The shade here is cool, and if we had a bottle of wine, a sliced melon, and a little ice, our pleasure would be complete."

"And you think I must conceal myself here?"

"Undoubtedly, mon ami; our people are scouring all the highways, and would be sure to cut you off. Then there is that devilish Spaniard—ah, the brigand!—he will not be in haste to forget the knock you gave him on the head, and should he or his comrades fall in with you, I would not give you a sou for your safety!"

"Strange, is it not, that the first man I have struck on Spanish ground should be a Spaniard?"

"These dons have unpleasant memories for such little attentions, and here the secret shot or stab usually settles everything; but before we separate, I shall have the honour of showing you the direct path to the head-quarters of De Saldos, after which, you must look to your pistols and put your trust in Providence. I shall keep your secret, and if there is any other way in which I can serve you, command me."

"I thank you; but I hope that to-night, or to-morrow morning at latest, will see my face turned towards Portugal, for I long to rejoin my corps."

"The fugitives of my party will spread a calamitous report concerning me in Valencia, and my father, the poor old general, will suppose that I am lying shot on the mountains, instead of holding this pleasant *tête-à-tête* with one of the sacré Anglais over the comfortable contents of his canteen," said Ribeaupierre, laughing. "What a droll world it is!"

"And your mother—I think I heard you mention your mother. She——"

"Happily will know nothing about it, as she is with Joseph's court. She is a gentle and loving creature, with a heart all tenderness. Ah, the seat of war would never do for her, and *ma foi*! it does not suit me either. It was not willingly I became a soldier, be assured; and yet, now that I am fairly in for it, and have won my epaulettes and cross, I should not like to find myself a mere citizen again. Peste! I shall not in a hurry forget the night on which, by a great malheur, a great mistake, I was forced to become a soldier."

"Mistake—how?" asked Quentin, smiling at the young Frenchman's gestures and energy.

"Mon camarade, a man says more when under the influences

of eau-de-vie, or champagne, than he ever does under those of vin-ordinaire, cold water, or a bowl of gruel; and as your remarkably potent rum-and-water has put me in that condition when a man reveals his loves and hates, and, more foolish still, sometimes his private history, I don't care if I tell you how I became a soldier.

"My father," began the garrulous chasseur, "is an officer of the old days of the monarchy, and held his first commission, like the Emperor himself, from Louis XVI., the Most Christian King, and they were brother subalterns in the regiment of La Fere. To the friendship that grew up between them there, the old gentleman owes his brigade and the Grand Cross of the Legion, quite as much as to his own bravery in Germany, Italy, and Flanders. My mother (or she at least whom I have been taught to call my mother, for she is his second wife) was a widow of rank, who lost her whole possessions in the stormy days of the Revolution. She was without children, and when my father was assisting the Little Corporal to play the devil at Toulon, Arcola, Lodi, Marengo, and elsewhere, she most affectionately took charge of me, and of my education in Paris.

"As we were not rich, it was proposed to make a doctor of me, and I was duly matriculated at the Ecole de Médecine, and commenced my studies there, not with much enthusiasm or industry either; but in the vague hope, nevertheless, that I might some day cut a figure and have my portrait hung among the full lengths of Ambrose Paré, Marechal, La Peyronnie, and others in the school.

"I look back with no small repugnance to the daily tasks I performed there, and to the horrors of the dissecting-room, after boyish curiosity grew satiated. My brain became addled by lectures on the maxillary sinus, on diseases of the stomach, of the pylorus, the hepatic and abdominal viscera; elephantiasis, aortic aneurism, the lacteal and glandular system, and Heaven alone knows all what more, till I imagined that I had alternately in my own person every ailment peculiar to man. We had plenty of subjects, for daily the guillotine was slicing away in the Place de la Grève, and I have seen the loveliest women and the noblest men in France laid on those tables to be stripped and dissected by the knife of the demonstrator.

"I was soon voted the worst if not the most stupid student that ever put his foot within the college walls. The professors were in despair. They could make nothing of me; and to muddle my poor brain more, about this time I must needs fall in love. Ah! I perceive that you now become interested. I was not much over seventeen, and my first love——"

"First?" said Quentin.

"*Oui—ma foi!* I have had a dozen—was Madame Lisette Thiebault, a friend of my mother."

"A widow, of course?"

"Not at all. She was unfortunately the wife of one of our doctors in the Rue de l'Ecole de Médecine," replied the *étourdi* young Frenchman.

"Married!" said poor Quentin, somewhat aghast.

Peste! of course she was; but we don't care for such little obstacles in Paris. Well, Lisette, for so I must name her, was nearly ten years my senior, and so had what she called a motherly interest in me. She was a very handsome woman, somewhat inclined to *embonpoint*, with a clear pale complexion and laughing eyes, exactly the colour of her hair, which was a rich deep brown. She was always gay, laughing and smiling, except when her husband, the doctor, was present, and one could no more make fun with him, than with old Bébé."

"Who, or what was he?"

"The mummy of the King of Poland's dwarf—*Ouf!* what a horror it is!—which we have in the School of the Faculty at Paris. Lisette was very fond of me, and, being a little addicted to literature—she was fond of poetry, too—so we read much together.

"Ere long, monsieur, the doctor began to think all this very improper, so he rudely and abruptly put a stop to our studies; he locked Ovid up, and me out. *Tudieu!* here was an outrage! I thought of inviting him to breathe the morning air on the Bois de Boulogne; but a duel between a first-year's student and an old doctor was not to be thought of. Madame had a tender heart, so she pitied me. She considered her husband's conduct cruel, ungrateful, outrageous, barbarous; so, as it was necessary that my classical studies should not be neglected, we arranged a little code of signals. Thus, Lisette, by simply keeping a drawing-room window open or shut, or a muslin curtain festooned or closely drawn, could inform me when Bluebeard was at home or abroad; whether the breach was practicable or not; and thus we circumvented our tyrant for a time, and I returned with ardour to the study of classical poetry; but as for the dissecting-room, diable! it saw no more of me.

"Of the doctor I had always a wholesome dread, as he was a *Septembriseur.*"

"What is that?" asked Quentin, perceiving a dark expression shade the face of Ribeaupierre.

"'Tis a name we have in Paris for those who were concerned as aiders or abettors of the horrible September massacres—he

would have thought no more of silly putting a bullet into me, than of killing a wasp; thus, you see, I pursued the acquisition of knowledge under difficulties.

"Now came out the edict issued about eight years ago, for raising two hundred thousand men for the army and marine, and every young man in France had to inscribe his name for the conscription. I omitted—we shall call it delayed—to inscribe mine; but my learned friend, M. le Docteur Thiebault, unknown to me, performed that little service in my behalf. He was extremely loth that the Republic—it was the glorious indivisible Republic of liberty, equality, fraternity, and tyranny then—should be deprived of my valuable aid by land or sea.

"About the time when he usually returned from visiting his patients, I had bidden adieu to madame, for our studies were over, and in the dusk of the evening was on my way home when surprised by a patrol of the police under a commissaire, at the corner of the Rue Ecole de Médecine. To avoid them I shrank into a porch, but they invited me rather authoritatively to come forth, and on my doing so, a sergeant passed his lantern scrutinizingly across my face.

"A young man,' said the commissaire, who was new in the quartier; 'who are you?'

"I am not obliged to say,' said I.

"Ah—we shall see that; what are you?'

"A student of the Faculty of Médecine. Vive la République! War to the cottage—peace to the castle!' I replied, waving my hat.

"Is your name inscribed for the levy, blunderer? You quote oddly for a student!'

"Of course my name is inscribed,' said I, boldly, though I little knew that it was so.

"Show me your card which certifies this.'

"Mon Dieu!' I exclaimed, as a brilliant thought occurred to me; 'do not speak so loud, monsieur.'

"Diable! may we not raise our voices in the streets of Paris?' he asked.

"Not if you knew the mischief an alarm would do me.'

"Tête Dieu! 'tis an odd fellow, this!'

"Monsieur, pity me!' said I, in a voice full of entreaty. 'I throw myself upon your generosity—I perceive that I melt your heart. I have not my card; it is with my wife—'

"Morbleu! you are very young to have a wife, my friend, with a chin like an apple,' said the grim old sergeant, as he passed his lantern across my face again; 'I hope she is fully grown; but to the point, my fine fellow, or we shall have to

march you to the Conciergerie, and they have an unpleasant mode of pressing questions there.'

"Where is this wife of yours, my little friend?"

"In her house, M. le Commissaire, where you see that light above the lamp with the scarlet bottle. Ah, the perfidious! There she awaits a lover for whom I am watching.'

"I acted my part to the life, though jealousy is *not* a peculiarity of French husbands.

"And this lover?" said the commissaire, becoming suddenly interested, perhaps from some fellow-feeling.

"He is a young brother student of mine."

"His name?" said the commissaire, producing a note-book.

"Eugène de Ribeaupierre."

"We know him," said the other, 'for the greatest young rascal in all Paris. He destroyed a tree of liberty in the Palais Royal, and painted the nose of Equality red in the Jardin des Plantes.'

"The same, monsieur," said I, in a whining voice; 'he will come here disguised in a grey wig and spectacles to delude you, M. le Commissaire, and me, too, unhappy that I am. Ah, mon Dieu, there he is! there he is! Seize him, in the name of morality and justice, of the République Démocratique et Sociale!'

"The patrol instantly laid violent hands on the person of Doctor Thiebault, who, to do him justice, made a violent resistance, and broke the sergeant's lantern, to the tune of twenty francs, before he was borne off to the Conciergerie, where he passed three days and nights in a horrid vault among thieves and malefactors, before he was brought up for examination, when it was discovered that it was not a young student, but an old professor of the healing art, standing high in the estimation of all Paris, who had been maltreated and carried off by the watch.

"So the whole story came out, and on the fourth day I found myself off *en route* to join my father's corps of Chasseurs à Cheval, then serving against the Austrians. My good mother shed abundance of tears at my departure; the Abbé Lebrun gave me abundance of good advice and a handful of louis d'or, which I considered of more value, and in a month after I found myself face to face with the white coats in the forest of Frisenheim, on the left bank of the Rhine.

"As a parting gift my dear friend Lisette had given me a holy medal to save me from bullets and so forth; but, diable! it nearly cost me my life, for one of the first balls fired near Oggersheim beat it into my ribs; the ball came out, and the blessed medal stuck fast, and all the skill of our three doctor, was required to extract it, so after three months I found myself again in beloved Paris on sick leave."

CHAPTER XLVII.

THE GALIOTE OF ST. CLOUD.

"To be generous, guiltless, and of free disposition, is to take those things for bird-bolts that you deem cannon-bullets. There is no slander in an allowed fool, though he do nothing but rail; nor no railing in a known discreet man, though he do nothing but reprove."—*Twelfth Night*.

"So," resumed Ribeaupierre, "this was the way in which I became one of the 24th Chasseurs à Cheval, in the service of the Republic one and indivisible, as it boasted to be, as well as democratic and social; and how I now find myself a sous-lieutenant, under the Emperor, whom God long preserve!"

"And Lisette?—"

"Bah! in my absence I found that she had taken to study poetry with M. Grobbin, a grenadier of the Consular Guard, the same who was the cause of the First Consul issuing his remarkable order of the day, concerning that Parisian weakness for destroying one's self, in the passion named love. Did you never hear of it?"

"No."

"Ma foi! You English know nothing that is acted out of your foggy little island."

"And this order—"

"Stated that as the Grenadier Grobbin had destroyed himself in despair, for his dismissal by Madame de Thiebault, the First Consul directed that it should be inserted in the order of the day for the Consular Guard, 'that a soldier ought to know how to subdue sorrow and the agitation of the passions; that there is as much courage in enduring with firmness the pains of the heart as remaining steady under the grape-shot of a battery; and to abandon one's self to grief without resistance, to kill one's self in order to escape from it, is to fly from the field of battle before one is conquered!' The order was signed by Bonaparte, as First Consul, and countersigned by Jean Baptiste Bessières."

"Have you ever seen the Emperor?" asked Quentin.

"Once, mon ami—only once."

"In the field?"

"No; but nearer than I ever wish to see him again, under the same circumstances at least. Shall I tell you how it was?"

"If you please."

"Well, monsieur, it happened in this way. I had just been appointed a sous-lieutenant in the 24th Chasseurs à Cheval; we had returned from service in Italy, and were quartered at St.

Cloud, where we were soon tired of the gardens, cafés, water-works, and so forth. A few of us had been on leave in Paris for some days, where our spare cash and prize money were soon spent among the theatres, operas, feasting, and other means of emptying one's purse, so we were returning cheaply to barracks by the galiote, which then used to traverse the great bend of the Seine every morning, leaving the Pont Royal about ten o'clock for St. Cloud; the voyage usually lasted about two hours, and cost us only sixteen sous each.

"On this occasion, as the morning was very wet, the canvas covering was drawn close, and as we had the galiote all to ourselves—save one person, a stranger—we were very merry, very noisy, and very much at home indeed, proceeding to smoke without the ceremony of asking this person's permission, for which, indeed, we cared very little, as he appeared to be a plain little citizen some five feet high, about thirty-six years of age, and possessing a very sombre cast of face, over which he wore a rather shabby hat drawn well down, a grey greatcoat with a queer cape, and long boots; and he appeared to be completely immersed in the columns of his newspaper.

"We were conversing with great freedom concerning the consulate, which was just on the point of expanding into an empire, and our senior lieutenant, Jules de Marbœuf (now our lieutenant-colonel) was named by us 'Monseigneur le Maréchal Duc de Marbœuf and master of the horse to Pepin le Bref.' Then we ridiculed unmercifully the proposal of the Tribune Citizen Curée, that the First Consul should be proclaimed *Emperor*, and in this quality continue the government of the French Republic.

"'Peste! what a paradox it is!' exclaimed Jules, emitting a mighty puff of smoke, as he lounged at length upon the cushioned seat of the galiote.

"'And the Imperial dignity is to be declared hereditary in his family,' I added, impudently, reclosing one of the openings in the awning, which the quiet stranger had opened, as our smoking evidently annoyed him.

"'In three days *the pear will be ripe*; France will become an appanage of Corsica, and I shall obtain my diploma as peer and marshal of France,' exclaimed Jules with loud voice; 'and you, Eugene—'

"'Oh, I shall be Minister of War to the Little Corporal.'

"'Bravo!' said the others, clapping their hands; 'we shall all pick up something among the ruins of this vulgar and tiresome Republic.'

"'M. le Citoyen,' said Jules, with affected courtesy, 'I perceive the smoke annoys you—you don't like it—eh?'

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"'No, monsieur,' replied the other briefly and sternly.

"'Then M. le Citoyen had better land, for before we reach St. Cloud, he will be smoked like a Westphalian ham.'

"'Take care, Jules,' said I, 'the citizen may be a fire-eater—some devil of a fellow who spends half his days in a shooting gallery.'

"'Parbleu, he doesn't look much like a fire-eater; but perhaps monsieur is an editor—an author?', suggested Jules, with another long puff.

"'Exactly,' said I; 'he is an author.'

"'Of what?'

"'The famous *Voyage à Saint Cloud par mer, et retour par terre*, taking notes for a new edition.'

"This sally produced a roar of laughter, on which the citizen suddenly folded his paper and prepared to rise, as we were now close to St. Cloud.

"'Don't forget to record, M. l'Editeur, that last week I pulled a charming young girl out of the river close by.'

"'Trust you didn't pull her hair up by the roots, Jules,' said one.

"'Or rumple her dress?' said another.

"'Fie!' I exclaimed; 'but you will give us each a copy, M. l'Editeur?'

"'On receiving your cards, messieurs,' replied the other with a grim smile.

"'Here is mine—and mine—and mine,' said we, thrusting them upon him.

"'And here is mine,' said he, presenting to Jules an embossed card, on which was engraved 'Napoleon Bonaparte, First Consul.'

"We remained as if paralysed, unable either to speak or move; but the justly incensed First Consul, after quitting the galiote, which was now moored alongside the quay, said to a gentleman whose uniform proclaimed him a general officer, and who seemed to be waiting there,—

"'Bessières, take the swords of these gentlemen, who are to be placed under close arrest, and send the colonel of the 24th Chasseurs to me instantly.'

"His massive features were pale as marble; his keen dark eyes shot forth a lurid glare; his lips were compressed with concealed fury, and we all trembled before the terrible glance of this little man in long boots. Ah, mon Dieu! what a moment it was! How foolish, how triste, how crestfallen we all looked.

"'Your name, monsieur?' said he suddenly to me.

"'Eugène de Ribeaupierre,' said I, with a profound salute.

"'Any relation to the officer who bears that name, and who was captain-lieutenant in the Regiment de la Fere?'

"'I am his only son, monseigneur.'

"'That reply has saved you and your companions from degradation and imprisonment; but still you must be taught, messieurs, that to protect, and not to insult the citizen, is the first duty of a soldier. To your quarters, messieurs, and report yourselves under arrest until further orders!'

"The authoritative wave of his hand was enough, and we slunk away with terrible forebodings of the future. A severe reprimand was administered through Bessières; but whether it was that our political opinions had been uttered too freely, or that the First Consul had no wish to see the 24th figure in the forthcoming pageant of his coronation as Emperor, I know not, but on the day following our precious voyage to St. Cloud, we got our route for Genoa, so that was my first and last meeting with our glorious Emperor, whose name I have made a *cri de guerre* in many a battle and skirmish, and for whom I am ready to die!" he added, with genuine enthusiasm. "Sunset! there goes the gun in Valencia," he exclaimed, as the boom of a cannon pealed through the still air. "The evening is advancing monsieur, and we must part, unless you will accompany me to Valencia."

"Impossible!" said Quentin.

"I will gage my word of honour for your safety there and safe-conduct to the mountains," said he, as they issued cautiously from the thicket upon the highway.

"I thank you, but I am most anxious to complete my task."

"*Très bien*—so be it; then we part at yonder cypress-trees. Hola! what have we here—a dead horse—the charger of one of my men?" exclaimed Ribeaupierre, as they came suddenly upon a cavalry-horse lying dead, with all his housing and trappings on, by the wayside. "It is the horse of Corporal Raoul, one of the three men who fell in the ambuscade—several bullets have struck the poor nag, and it has galloped here only to bleed to death. Raoul was a devil of a fellow for plunder; I know that he always carried something else than pistols in his holsters—let us see."

Unbuttoning the flaps of the holsters, Ribeaupierre drew forth a pistol from each, and these, as they were loaded, he retained; but at the bottom of one holster-pipe he found a canvas bag.

"*Parbleu*, look here! Raoul, poor devil, thought no doubt to spend these among the girls in Paris. Plunder, every sou of it,"

he added, tumbling among the grass a heap of gold moidores, which are Portuguese coins, each worth twenty-seven shillings sterling. "This is Raoul's share of the sacking of Coimbra, which the Portuguese permitted themselves to make such a hideous bawling about. It was the plunder of the living, so you may as well have a share of it *now* that it is the spoil of the dead."

"Who—I?" said Quentin, hesitating.

"Take it—*ma foi!*"

"Can I do so?"

"I should think so; what—would you leave it here to fall into Spanish hands, or be buried with a dead horse?" said Ribeaupierre, as he rapidly divided the money, which amounted to one hundred and sixty pieces in all. "'Tis eighty moidores each; a sum like that is not to be found often by the wayside."

He almost thrust his share into Quentin's pocket, and a few minutes after, they bade each other warmly adieu, with little expectation of ever meeting again.

Ribeaupierre pursued his way towards Valencia de Alcantara, while, following his direction, Quentin proceeded towards the hills near Herrerueta, the rocky peaks of which were yet gleaming in crimson light, though the sun had set.

He seemed still to hear the pleasant voice, and to see the dark and expressive face of his recent companion as he trod lightly on, clinking his moidores, happy that he was now master of a sum amounting to more than a hundred pounds sterling, which would enable him to repay his dear old friend the quartermaster, and would amply supply his own wants while on service, for some time at least.

It was a remarkable stroke of good fortune, and he reflected that but for his meeting with Ribeaupierre, he might have passed without examining the dead troop-horse that lay by the wayside; he reflected further, that but for the turn taken happily by the episodes of the day, he might have fallen into the hands of a French patrol, and been now, with his despatch, in safe keeping within the walls of Valencia.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

THE GUERRILLA HEAD-QUARTERS.

"I made a mountain brook my guide,
Through a wild Spanish glen,
And wandered, on its grassy side,
Far from the homes of men.
It lured me with a singing tone,
And many a sunny glance,
To a green spot of beauty lone,
A haunt for old romance."—MRS. HEMANS.

SAVE in the west, where the hues of crimson and gold predominated, the sunset sky was all of a pale violet. Though the mountain peaks were rough and barren, and the plains of Estremadura, long abandoned and for ages uncultivated, were waste and wild in general, the road by which Quentin proceeded towards Herreruela lay through rich scenery and land that was fertile.

The tall Indian corn had been reaped, but its thick brown stubble remained. In some places it had too evidently been destroyed by fire to keep it from the French, or by them to harass and distress the Spaniards. The olive and the vine grew wild by the wayside; the orange tree and the leafy lime, the fig, and the prickly pear were frequently mingled in the same place with the variegated holly, while the myrtle and the lavender flower loaded the air with sweet perfume.

Darkness came rapidly on; the reddened summits of the sierra grew sombre, the western flush of light died away, and ere long Quentin found himself traversing a steep and gloomy road, that led right into the heart of the mountains.

A sound that came on the night wind made him pause and listen.

It was the great bell of Valencia de Alcantara—the same that had rung so joyously when the Christian cavaliers of Salamanca defended the wild gorge through which the Tagus rolls at Al-Kantarah (*the bridge of the Moors*)—and it was now tolling the hour of ten.

Ribeaupierre was now with his friends and comrades, doubtless recounting his adventures and his escape, by the aid of a British soldier. A knowledge of this caused Quentin some anxiety, lest among the listeners, there might be some who had neither the gratitude nor the chivalry of the young chasseur, and who might take means to cut off his return to Portugal,

for he was now fully aware of the risk he ran on the Spanish side, and began to see something of the snare into which he had fallen.

As the last stroke of the bell died away on the wind, a sense of intense loneliness came over Quentin's heart; the sound seemed to come from a vast distance, and the narrow road he was traversing penetrated into the mountains, which seemed to become darker and steeper on each side of it; but there is something intoxicating in the idea of peril to a gallant soul. It kindles a glorious enthusiasm at times, and thus he marched manfully on till a voice in Spanish, loud, sonorous, and ringing, demanded in a military manner—

"*Quien esta ahi?*" (Who comes there?)

"*Gente de paez,*" replied Quentin, while the rattle of a musket and the click of the lock as it was cocked came to his ear, and he saw the dark outline of a human figure appear suddenly in the centre of the path.

"*Estere ahi* (Stay there), and say from whence you come," said the challenger again.

Quentin naturally paused before replying, as he knew not by whom he was confronted, and could only make out a tall figure wearing a slouched sombrero, by the pale light of the stars.

"Presto—quick!" continued the stranger, slapping the butt of his musket; "from whence come you?"

"The British cantonments," replied Quentin, conceiving the truth to be the wisest answer to a Spaniard.

"*Bueno!* why didn't you say so at once?" exclaimed the other; "but what seek you here?"

"I am bearer of a despatch for Don Baltasar de Saldos. Am I right in supposing you are one of his people?"

"Si, senor; this is his head-quarters."

By this time Quentin had come close to the questioner, who still kept his bayonet at the charge, and who seemed to be a Spanish peasant, accoutred with crossbelts and cartridge-box. He was posted on the summit of a hastily-constructed earthwork, which was formed across the road in a kind of gorge through which it passed; and there, too, were in position three brass field-pieces, French apparently, loaded no doubt with grape or canister to sweep the steep and narrow approach.

Beside them lounged a guard of some forty men or so, muffled in their cloaks, smoking or sleeping, but all of whom sprang to their feet and to their weapons as Quentin approached. He had now taken off his grey coat to display his scarlet uniform, and, when one of the guard held up a lantern to take a survey of him,

loud vivas and mutterings of satisfaction and welcome greeted him on all sides.

"Senors, where shall I find Don Baltasar?" he inquired.

"At his quarters in the puebla, senor. Lazarillo, conduct the senor to De Soldas," said one who seemed to exercise some authority over the rest; "but I fear you will find him busy at present. At what time are those French prisoners to be despatched?"

"Midnight, Senor Conde," replied he whom he had named Lazarillo.

"It wants but half an hour to that," said the guerilla officer, who was no other than the Conde de Maciera, as he looked at his watch; and it was with emotions of intense pleasure and satisfaction that Quentin found himself proceeding towards the mountain village which formed the head-quarters of the formidable guerilla chief, and thus acting, as he hoped, the last scene in the task assigned him; but he knew little of the people among whom he was thrown, for in character they are unlike all the rest of Europe.

"Nature and the natives," says a traveller, "have long combined to isolate still more their peninsula, which is already moated round by the unsocial sea. The Inquisition all but reduced the Spanish man to the condition of a monk in a wall-enclosed convent, by standing sentinel and keeping watch and ward against the foreigner and his perilous novelties. Spain, thus unvisited and unvisiting, became arranged for *Spaniards only*, and has scarcely required conveniences which are more suited to the curious wants of other Europeans and strangers, who here are neither liked, wished for, or even thought of—natives who never travel except on compulsion, and never for amusement—why, indeed, should they?"

Late though the hour, the guerillas, a loose and, of course, disorderly force at all times, seemed all astir in their quarters. By the clear starlight Quentin could see that the street consisted of humble cottages bordering the way, with red-tiled roofs, over nearly every one of which a huge old knotty vine was straggling. At one end rose a strong old archway, "old," Lazarillo said, "as the days of King Bomba," and there, when the puebla had been a place of greater pretension, a gate had closed the thoroughfare by night.

Now there was no barrier save a bank of earth and rubbish, hastily thrown up, and a couple of field-pieces mounted thereon seemed to hint the rigour with which intruders would be prosecuted; in short, it prevented any sudden surprise in that direction. There were lights—pine torches or candles—burning in all the

houses, and, as he passed the windows, Quentin could perceive the dark-bearded faces, the striking figures, and varied costumes of the guerillas. Various groups of them thronged the little street, and a company of them were parading, under arms, before the largest house in the puebla.

"That is the posada, senor," said Quentin's guide. "There Don Baltasar resides; but we have come too late to speak with him, at least until his work is done."

"His work," repeated Quentin, inquiringly; "what is about to be done?"

"*Por Dios!* you shall soon see," he replied with a grin, as a number of men bearing blazing pine torches issued from the large house, which the guide styled the posada, and, by the united light of these, Quentin was enabled to behold a strange, a wild, and very awful scene.

As a drum only half braced was hoarsely beaten, the guerillas came swarming out of the wayside cottages in hundreds, and a singularly savage but picturesque set of fellows they were. All were strong and hardy Castilians; many were exceedingly handsome both in face and form, and there was scarcely one among them that might not have served as a model for a sculptor or a study for an artist.

Their Spanish peasant costumes, in some instances, were sombre and tattered, in others new and gay; the jackets, olive or claret colour, being gaudily embroidered, and worn over the scarlet or yellow sashes which girt the short, loose trousers. Many were bare-legged and bare-footed, and many wore long leather abarcas. Not a few wore fanciful uniforms of all colours, among which Quentin recognised the brown coats of the Spanish line, and a few scarlet, which had no doubt been stripped from the dead at Roleia and Vimiera, as they seemed to have belonged to the 29th regiment, and the Argyleshire Highlanders.

Most of them wore the native sombreros; many had their coal-black locks gathered in a net of scarlet twine, or bound by a large yellow handkerchief, the fringed end of which floated on the left shoulder, while others sported regimental shakos and staff cocked-hats. All were armed with long Spanish guns, sabres, pistols, and daggers, and all nearly were cross-belted with cartridge-box and bayonet.

In one or two instances the closely-shaven chin and the tonsure, but ill-concealed by the half-grown hair, indicated the unfrocked friar, who had taken up arms inspired by patriotism or revenge against the destroyers of convents, or it might be to have a turn once more in the world, while the state of Spain loosed all ties, divine as well as human.

Half hidden in the shadow of the starlight night, and half thrown forward into the strong red glare of the upheld pine torches that streamed in the wind, the figures of those in the foreground and those flitting about in the rear—the varied colours of their customs, their black beards and glittering eyes, their flashing weapons, together with the rude mountain village, with its old and time-worn archway, made altogether a strangely wild and picturesque scene.

But its darker and more terrible features are yet to be described.

CHAPTER XLIX.

A REPRISAL.

“Proud of the favours mighty Jove has shown,
On certain dangers we too rashly run;
If 'tis His will our haughty foes to tame,
Oh, may this instant end the Grecian name!
Here far from Argos let their heroes fall,
And one great day destroy and bury all!”—*Iliad* xiii.

QUENTIN'S nerves received something like an electric shock when, on proceeding a little further forward, he saw a line consisting of sixteen poor French prisoners, partly bound by ropes, standing in front of the rudely-formed rampart which closed up the archway, and in front of them were four large pits, whose appalling shape and aspect left no doubt that they were to be the premature graves of the unfortunate men who now stood in health and strength beside them.

Those sixteen persons were of various ranks, as four at least seemed by their silver epaulettes to be officers, and medals and crosses glittered on the breasts of several. Their uniform was dark blue, lapelled with red, and all the privates wore large shoulder-knots of scarlet worsted. They were all French infantry men, taken in some recent skirmish. Bareheaded, they stood a sad-looking line, and in their pale but war-bronzed faces, on which the flickering glare of the torches fell with weird and wavering gleams, there seemed to be no ray of hope for mercy or reprieve at the hands of their captors, who were about to sacrifice them in the horrid spirit of reprisal which then existed between the Spanish guerillas and the French invaders.

“Good heavens!” said Quentin, in an agitated whisper; “are these men about to be shot?”

“Si, señor—every one of them!”

“For what reason?”

"Being on the wrong side of the Pyrenees," replied the Spaniard, with a cruel grin.

"Shot—and without mercy?"

"Precisely so, *senor*."

"By whose order?"

"One who does not like his orders questioned—Don Baltasar de Saldos."

"Is he capable of such an act?"

"Capable! Santiago! The French have made his heart as hard as if it had been dipped in the well of Estremoz (beyond the mountains), which turns everything to flinty rock."

As if to enhance the torture of their anticipated doom, the Spaniards went slowly and deliberately about the selection of a firing party, which consisted of no less than sixty men, who loaded in a very irregular manner, and, as their steel ramrods flashed in the torch-light and went home with a dull *thud* on the ball cartridges, a thrill seemed to pass through the prisoners.

One, a grim-visaged and grey-moustached old captain of grenadiers, folded his arms, shrugged his shoulders, and smiled in scorn and defiance. Doubtless, since the fall of the Bastile and the days of the barricades, he had seen human lives lavished with a recklessness that hardened him; but there was another officer who covered his face with his handkerchief and wept; not in cowardice, for his gallant breast was covered with the medals of many an honourable field; but perhaps his heart at that moment was far away with his wife and little ones in some sunny vale of Languedoc, or by the banks of the silvery Garonne.

Some had their teeth clenched, and their eyes wearing a wild glare of hate, of fear, and defiance mingled; some there were who seemed scarcely conscious of the awful doom prepared for them, and some glanced wistfully and fearfully at the newly-dug pits which were to receive them when all was over.

Some were occupied by external objects, and the eyes of one followed earnestly the course of a falling star of great beauty and brilliance, which vanished behind the hills of Albuquerque.

A guerilla, clad in somewhat tattered black velvet, now took off his sombrero, and in doing so, displayed, by a pretty plain tonsure, that he was an unfrocked or degraded priest; but now inspired by something of his former holy office, he held up a small crucifix, and exclaimed—

"Frenchmen, if any man among you is a true son of the Church, I pray God and the Blessed Madonna to receive him, and have mercy on his soul!"

"That is the Padre Trevino, our second in command," whispered Lazarillo; "and he is the best shot among us."

As Trevino spoke, the sixteen prisoners and all the onlookers, crossed themselves very devoutly. Some of the doomed closed their eyes, and by their muttering, seemed to be praying very earnestly. Intensity of emotion seemed to render them all more or less athirst, as they were seen to moisten their pale lips with their tongues.

The stern grey-haired captain on the right alone seemed unmoved; he had neither a prayer to give to Heaven or to earth, and thus stood gazing stonily and grimly at his destroyers.

"On your knees, seniors! on your knees!" said Trevino.

"Never to Spaniards!" replied the old captain.

"Are they really in earnest, M. le Capitaine?" asked the prisoner next him, a mere youth.

"Earnest—*ma foi!* I should think so, Louis."

"Ah, *mon Dieu*—to be shot thus—it is terrible!" he exclaimed, in a piercing voice.

"On your knees, Frenchmen," repeated the militant friar, "not to us, but to God!"

"To the blessed God, then," said the old captain; "kneel, comrades; 'tis the last word of command you will ever hear from me."

They all knelt, and now the firing party came forward three paces—

— "a death-determined band,
Hell in their face and horror in their hand."

And forming line about twenty paces from the prisoners, shouldered arms. Then Quentin felt his excited heart beating painfully in his breast, and he held his breath as if suffocating. From the shoulder the muskets were cast to the "ready," and then followed the terrible clicking of the sixty locks, a sound that made the youngest victim, who had been named Louis, a fair-haired lad (some poor conscript, torn from his mother's arms, perhaps), to shudder very perceptibly and close his eyes; and now came the three fatal and final words of command from the unfrocked friar.

"*Camaradas, preparen las armas!*"

"*Apunten!*"

("Vive la France! Vive l'Empereur!" cried the old captain, defiantly.)

"*FUEGO!*"

The straggling volley of musketry broke like a thunder peal upon the silence of the night, and echoed with a hundred reverberations among the mountains, till it was heard, perhaps, by the sentinels in Valencia. Red blood spirted from the wounds

of the victims, some of whom leaped wildly up and fell heavily on the ground. The grey smoke rolled over them in the torch-light, and when it was lifted upward like a vapoury curtain by the midnight wind, Quentin could see the sixteen hapless Frenchmen all lying upon the earth. Six were screaming in agony, imploring the Spaniards to end it—to finish the vile work they had begun—writhing in blood and beating the ground with their heels, but then there were ten, who, alas! lay still enough, with red currents streaming from the wounds in their yet quivering corpses.

Half killed and gasping painfully, the old French captain struggled into a sitting posture, but fell back again, as another volley poured in at ten paces ended the butchery.

In a few minutes more they were stripped, even to their boots, and flung quite nude and scarcely cold into the pits at the foot of the breastwork, four being cast into each.

In the pocket of the poor officer who had wept there was found a lady's miniature, and three locks of fair hair that had evidently belonged to little children. The loose earth was heaped over the dead, the torches were extinguished, and, like a dissolving view or some horrible phantasmagoria, the whole affair passed away and was over.

In the horror excited by the scene and all its details, Quentin forgot his mission, his despatch, almost his own identity; a sickness and giddiness came over him, till he was roused by the voice of Lazarillo, his guide, who said in the most matter-of-fact way—

"Follow me, senor—perhaps Don Baltasar can receive you now."

The house to which he was conducted was the most important in the place, and had been for ages its chief posada or caravan-serie, where the muleteers passing between Oporto, Lisbon, and the southern and eastern provinces of Spain, had been wont to halt and refresh. It is said to have been for a time the residence of the Scoto-Spaniard Don Iago Stuart, who, with the *Sabrina* and *Ceres*, two Spanish frigates, fought Lord Nelson for three hours in the Mediterranean, in 1796, with the loss of one hundred and sixty men.

The under story was appropriated to the stabling of horses, mules, and burros, and from thence a rickety wooden stair led to the upper floor, the walls of which were cleanly whitewashed, and the floors covered, not with carpets, which in Spain would soon become intolerable with insects, but with thin matting made of the esparto grass or wild rush.

Military arms and household utensils were hung upon the

walls or placed on the wooden shelves; the stiff-backed chairs and sofas were already occupied by some of the before-mentioned picturesque and motley actors in the late scene, and a large branch candlestick, that whilom had evidently figured on the altar of some stately church, with its cluster of sputtering candles, gave light to the long apartment, and enabled Quentin to examine it, and to see seated at the upper end, a man in a kind of uniform, writing, occasionally consulting an old and coarsely engraved map of Alentejo, and referring from time to time to the Padre Trevino and others, who leaned on their muskets, and who, lounging and laughing, smoked their cigaritos about his chair.

This personage wore a black velvet jacket fancifully embroidered with silver; a pair of British light Infantry wings, also of silver, probably stripped from some poor 29th man who fell at Roleia, were on his shoulders. He wore a gorgeous Spanish sash, with a buff cavalry waist-belt and heavy Toledo sabre in a steel scabbard. His sombrero, adorned by a gold band and large scarlet plume, was stuck very much on one side of his head, as if he were somewhat of a dandy; but underneath it was tied a handkerchief, deeply saturated with the blood of a recent wound.

"Senor Don Baltasar," said Lazarillo very respectfully, "a messenger from the British cantonments on the frontier."

He of the silver wings and Toledo sabre looked up, and Quentin was thunderstruck on finding himself face to face with the stranger of the wayside well, the same personage from whom he had rescued Eugene de Ribeaupierre, and whom he had stunned like an ox by a blow of the cajado!

CHAPTER L.

DON BALTASAR DE SALDOS.

"We must not fail, we must not fail,
 However fraud or force assail;
 By honour, pride, or policy,
 By Heaven itself! we must be free.
 We spurned the thought, our prison burst,
 And dared the despot to the worst:
 Renewed the strife of centuries,
 And flung our banner to the breeze."—DAVIS.

A START of extreme astonishment deepening into a black scowl, which anon changed to something of a scornful smile in the spaniards sallow visage, was Quentin Kennedy's first greeting

from the guerilla chief, who then bowed haughtily, and said with an unpleasant emphasis—

"Oho, senor; so *you* are the messenger! Santos—why didn't you tell me your errand on the day we met by the cross of King Alphonso? You would thus have saved yourself a devil of a journey and me this knock on the head."

"It would have been unwise to reveal my mission to the first stranger I met; I deplore the result of our second interview, senor; but I would not stand by and see an unarmed man killed without interfering."

"A Frenchman!" said Baltasar with intense scorn.

"Maledito," said the Padre Trevino, a man with a pair of quiet and deeply set, but the most treacherous looking dark eyes that ever glanced out of a human head. "Maledito!" he repeated, while playing with the knife in his sash, "so this is the fellow who wounded you and rescued the French officer?"

"Yes, Padre; but that is *my* affair, not yours," said Baltasar, haughtily.

"And your precious Frenchman—you conduted him no doubt to Valencia?" said the Padre, anxious apparently to make mischief.

"I left him very near it—indeed, he was my guide part of the way here," replied Quentin with composure.

"Very accommodating of him certainly," said Baltasar, in whose face the scowl returned; it was evident, apart from his indignation at Quentin, that he had found some of the *wrong eggs*, the legends on which foretold the early abandonment of the entire Peninsula by the British, for his mind was full of ill-concealed anger and apprehension. "You see now, senor," he resumed with a malevolent grimace, "you see now that the spit has become a sword, and the sword only a spit. Por vida del demonio! but Don Tomaso Yriarte was right after all, for we must never take men or things for what they may appear."

While Quentin was pondering what reply to make to this strange speech, a drop of blood fell from the wound in Baltasar's head, and made a large scarlet spot on the open map of Alentejo. On seeing this the eyes of the Spaniard flashed fire, his nostrils seemed to dilate, and striking the table with the haft of his dagger, he exclaimed—

"But that the fact of shooting the bearer of a British despatch—a messenger of Don Juan Hope, as Lazarillo says you are—might compromise me with the Junta of Castile as well as with your general, and thus injure the budding Spanish cause, by the Holy Face of Jaen! I would send you to keep company with those sixteen dogs whom Trevino shot to-night!"

"Senor, I was innocent of intending evil against *you*," urged poor Quentin.

"And this despatch which you bring, if it be as my soul forbodes, a notification that I am only to cover the retreat of the British when falling back upon Lisbon and the sea, then say over any prayer your heretic mother may have taught you, for you, Inglesse, shall not see the sun of to-morrow rise. I never forgive an insult—a word or a blow!

Though Quentin had been told at Portalegre somewhat of the contents of the despatch, he knew so little of the great game of war and politics about to be played in Spain that his mind misgave him, and he trembled in his heart lest the treasured paper which he now handed to this ferocious Spaniard, might indeed prove his death-warrant, and seal his doom! He thought of his pistols, and cast a glance around him—escape was hopeless, and a cruel smile wreathed the thin wicked lips of the Padre Trevino.

Baltasar tore open the long official sheet of paper, and when his piercing eyes had run rapidly over the contents, to Quentin's great relief of mind, a smile that was almost pleasant spread over his sallow visage, like sunshine on a lake.

"Hombres," he exclaimed to those around him, "listen! There are none here but true Castilians, so all may share my joy. On the second day of the ensuing November, the first division of the British army which is to rescue Spain will enter Castile by the Badajoz road, led by Sir John Hope, whose advance we are to cover by a collateral movement along the mountains by the hill of Albuera. Long live Ferdinand the Seventh!"

"Viva el Rey de Espana!"

"Viva el nombre de Jesus!"

Such were the kind of shouts that were raised by a hundred voices, while sundry faces, erewhile darkened by hostile and suspicious scowls, were now wreathed with broad smiles, and many a battered sombrero and greasy bandanna were flourished aloft, while to the triumphant vivas the musket-butts clattered an accompaniment on the esparto-covered floor; and many a somewhat dingy hand shook Quentin's with energy, while, in token of friendship and alliance, wine, cigaritos, and tobacco pouches were proffered him on all sides.

When the hubbub was somewhat over, Quentin (with some anxiety for his departure, as the atmosphere of the guerilla headquarters seemed a dangerous one) said to the chief—

"Don Baltasar, my orders were and my most earnest wishes are to join my regiment at Portalegre, so I should wish to set out by daybreak to-morrow."

"But the army will soon be advancing—why not remain with us till it comes up?"

"Impossible!" said Quentin, whose heart sank at the suggestion.

"Perhaps you think that you have seen enough of us; but in a war of independence, the invaded must not be too tender-hearted."

"Nay, senor; but if it would please you to give me to-night your reply to the general commanding our division, it would favour me greatly."

This simple question seemed to raise some undefinable suspicion, or recall something unpleasant to the Spaniard's mind, for, knitting his thick black brows over his deeply-set and lynx-like eyes, he regarded Quentin with a steady scrutiny, and said:

"You are not an officer, it would seem? (How often had this remark stung poor Quentin.) You have no sash, gorget, or epaulettes?"

"No, senor," replied Quentin, with a sigh; "I have not the good fortune."

"What are you then—a simple soldado?"

"Senor," replied Quentin, with growing irritation, for, in truth, he was very weary of his long days' journey, and its exciting episodes; "the letter you have just read, I believe, tells you what you require to know."

"Santos! you are a bold fellow to bear yourself thus to *me*."

"I am a British soldier on military duty," replied Quentin, loftily, as he saw that hardihood was the only quality appreciated by his new acquaintances.

"What is this? You are styled, *voluntario del Regimiento Fiente y Cinco—Fronteros del Rey*—is that it?"

"A volunteer of the King's Own Borderers—yes."

"An English corps, of course, by your uniform?" remarked Baltasar, while twisting up a cigarito.

"No, senor."

"*Maledito*—what then?" he asked, pausing, as he lit it.

"Escotos."

"*Demonio!* I saw them at Vimiera, and thought all the Escotos were bare-legged, and wore Biscayner's bonnets with great plumes. But you shall have the answer you wish this instant. I am not a man for delay."

"A guide also, senor, will be necessary, so that I may avoid the French patrols."

"You made your way here without one," said the Spaniard, with one of his keen and suspicious glances; "moreover, I suppose you are not without at least *one* French friend in Valencia;

but a guide you shall have, if we can spare one," he added, dipping a pen in an ink-horn, and, drawing before him a sheet of paper, he wrote hastily the following brief despatch, for *El Estudiante*, as he was sometimes named, had been well educated by his father, a professor at the University of Salamanca.

"SENOR GENERAL,—I have had the high honour of receiving your despatch announcing the day of your march into Castile, and, with the help of God, Madonna, and the saints, I shall be in motion at the same time towards the hill of Albuera, with my guerilla force, now two thousand strong, with five 12-pounders, to cover your flank, if necessary, from the cavalry of Ribeaupierre, who occupy all the district in and about Valencia. With the most profound esteem, I have the honour to be, illustrious Senor and General, &c. &c.—

"BALTASAR DE SALDOS Y SALAMANCA."

While addressing this letter, which he handed to Quentin, he turned to the Padre Trevino, who had stood all the while leaning on his long musket, and said, with a sombre expression on his dark face:—

"Padre, now that I have a moment to spare, I shall be glad to learn how your plan for ridding us of General de Ribeaupierre has failed, and what has become of your remarkably luxuriant beard and whiskers, which were ample enough to have frightened Murillo himself? You are now shaven as bare——"

"As when I threw my gown and sandals over the Dominican gate at Salamanca," interrupted the ex-friar, with a grin.

"Exactly so."

"Well, Baltasar, *amigo mio*, when I entered Valencia this morning, I had, as you know, a goodly natural crop of black beard and whiskers, with a wig that for length of matted locks rivalled those of Lazarillo here. Over these I had a high-crowned sombrero, with a tricoloured cockade, emblematical of my zealous loyalty to Joseph, the Corsican. Clad in an old brown mantle, I assumed the character of a poor, meek man, the bearer of a petition to the French general, De Ribeaupierre, whom I meant to stab to the heart as he read it—ay, *por Dios!* though surrounded by all his staff and quarter-guard, for I was well mounted, and they never would have overtaken or stopped me, save by closing the city gate.

"I reached the head-quarters just as the whole staff were turning out, for tidings had come that the guerillas of that devil of a fellow Baltasar the Salamanquino, had cut off a cavalry patrol, and shot the general's only son, a lieutenant of chasseurs. The excitement was great in the garrison, where there was such

mounting and spurring, drumming and so forth, that I was almost unheeded, while noisily importuning the staff-officers that I had a petition for the general.

" 'Here, Spaniard, give it to me,' said one who was covered with orders, pausing, as with his foot in the stirrup, he was just about to mount his horse.

"I measured him with a glance—I looked stealthily all round me to see that the streets were clear for a start, as he opened my petition and read it.

"I drew closer; the red cloud I have seemed to see on *former occasions*, came before my eyes; my heart beat wildly, my hand, hot and feverish, was on my knife. Another moment it was buried in his heart, and I was spurring along the street towards the southern gate, which I reached only to find it shut!"

"A thousand devils!" said Baltasar.

"*Por Baccho!*" muttered the listeners, with their eyes dilated.

Dismounting, I quitted my horse, rushed down an alley, where I saw the door of a bodega open, and plunged down into it unseen, scrambled over the borrachio skins into a dark corner and crept behind a heap of them. There I lay panting and breathless, dreading the proprietor (but he had been hanged that morning as a spy), and also the French, armed parties of whom passed and repassed, swearing and threatening; and from what they said, I learned that I had not killed the general——"

"Not killed him? what the devil, Padre!—I thought you *always* struck home!"

"So I do, and so I *did*, but the knife had reached only the heart of his military secretary."

"Well, then, 'tis one more Frenchman gone the downward road, the way we hope to send them all. And you——"

"I lay for some time in the cool wine vault, among the cobwebs and dirty borrachio skins. One of them—for the temptation was too great—I pierced with my yet bloody knife, and a long, long draught of the vino de Alicante, cold, dry, mellow, delicious, golden-coloured——"

"Ha, ha, ha! Bravo, Padre Trevino!" chorussed all the laughing listeners, as they clattered away with their musket-butts in applause of his atrocious narrative.

"Thou wert revived, no doubt?" said Baltasar, impatiently.

"*Amigo mio*, I should think so; it brightened my intellects; it gave me new ideas—I drew inspiration from that beloved borrachio skin. I cast away my ample wig, drew from my wallet shaving apparatus, and in a thrice I was shaven to the eyes, as you see me. Abandoning my cloak, I concealed my dagger in

my left sleeve, took a wine skin under my arm, and walking deliberately to the officer in command of the guard at the south gate, offered the wine for sale at half its value, seeming to all appearance a very quiet citizen, anxious in these hard times to do a little business, even with the enemy. He took the skin from me, bid me go to the devil for payment; the sentinel opened the wicket, and I was thrust out of Valencia—the very thing I wanted. I said nothing about my poor wife or starving little ones, lest their hearts might relent, but turned my face to the mountains, and I am here.”

This savage story met, we have said, with great applause, and Quentin, after the scene he had witnessed in the street of the puebla, felt no surprise that it did so; but his horror of the Padre was great, and he felt his repugnance for the guerillas increase every moment.

Policy and necessity forced him to dissemble; yet, in that mountain village there seemed such an atmosphere of blood, dishonourable warfare, and patriotism, gone mad, that he longed intensely to be out of it, and once again in the more congenial and civilized society he had left.

“Supper, senor,” said Don Baltasar, rising from the table and gathering up his papers; “let us rest now, for you must be weary, and in truth so am I; and then to bed, for the hour is late, and we have both work to do upon the morrow. Trevino, who has the quarter-guard?”

“El Conde de Maciera, senor,” replied the Padre.

“Good—not a bat will stir between this and Valencia without his hearing of it. This way, then,” added Baltasar, ushering them into an inner apartment, where a very different face from any Quentin had yet seen in the Peninsula shed a light upon the scene.

CHAPTER LI.

DONNA ISIDORA.

“She sung of love—while o’er her lyre
 The rosy rays of evening fell,
 As if to feed with their soft fire
 The soul within that trembling shell.
 The same rich light hung o’er her cheek,
 And played around those lips that sung,
 And spoke as flowers would sing and speak,
 If love could lend their leaves a tongue.”—MOORE.

UNPLEASANT though his new acquaintances were in many ways, Quentin felt a certain sense of lofty satisfaction that he was a

successful though humble actor in the great European drama. His mission was achieved! The junction with the first division would doubtless be effected by the guerillas, and as he thought of the castle of Rohallion and those who were there, of gentle Flora Warrender and his boyish love, he began to hope—indeed to believe—that he was actually destined for great things after all.

In such a mind as Quentin's there was much of chivalry, nobility, and enthusiasm that mingled with his deep love for a pure and beautiful young girl like Flora.

In some respects, the companionship, aspect, equipment, and bearing of those half-lawless, but wholly patriotic soldiers, seemed a realization of those day-dreams of imaginary adventures his romance reading had led him to weave and fashion; but the awful episode of the night, though fully illustrative of the Spanish character, and of the mode in which the patriots were disposed to carry on the war, was a feature in guerilla life never to be forgotten!

"My sister, the Senora Donna Isidora," said Baltasar, assuming much of the courtly bearing of a true Spanish gentleman, while introducing Quentin to a very handsome girl; "Donna Ximena, the mother of our comrade Trevino," he added, with a deeper reverence, on presenting him to a woman, so old, little, dark, and hideous, that, after bowing, he hastened to look again at the younger lady.

"The senor will kiss your hand, Isidora," said Don Baltasar.

Quentin did so, just touching with his lip a very lovely little hand, but, happily for him, the leathern paw of the venerable Trevino was not presented. Then the party, which consisted of Baltasar, Trevino, two other Spaniards, whose names are of no consequence, the two ladies, and their youthful guest, seated themselves at table.

The mother of the ungodly Trevino was a deaf old crone who seldom spoke, but always crossed herself with great devotion when Quentin looked her way, having a proper horror of all heretics, whom she believed to be the children of the devil, and all to be more or less possessed of the evil eye.

Beauty belongs to no particular country, and is to be found, more or less, everywhere, yet most travellers now begin to admit that Spanish beauty is somewhat of a delusion or a dream, which poets and novelists think it proper or necessary to indulge in and rave about; and some of the aforesaid travellers begin to assert that, beyond a pair of dark eyes and a set of regular teeth, it cannot be honestly said that the women of Spain have much to boast of.

Be that as it may, Isidora de Saldos was a singularly lovely

girl, in somewhere about her eighteenth year, a very ripe age in the sunny land of Castile. Her eyes indeed were marvellous, they were so soft and dark, and alternately so sparkling, languishing, and expressive of earnestness, all the more striking from the pale complexion of her little face. In their deep setting and with their long thick upper and lower lashes, those seductive eyes seemed to be black, while, in reality, they were of the darkest grey. Her dark brown hair was long, rich in colour, and unrivalled in softness. It was of that texture which, unhappily, never lasts long, and which often, ere five-and-twenty comes, has lost alike its length and profusion.

Her Spanish dress became her blooming years, her figure (which was rather *petite*), and the piquant character of her beauty. It consisted of a scarlet velvet corset, and short but ample skirts of alternate black and scarlet flounces, all very full; slippers of Cordovan leather, with high heels, and scarlet stockings, clocked almost to the knee, over the tightest of ankles.

A white muslin handkerchief, prettily disposed over her bosom, a high comb at the back of her head, round which her magnificent dark hair was gathered and fastened by a long gold pin, that looked unpleasantly like a poniard (indeed, it could be used as such), with silver bracelets on her slender wrists, long pendants that glittered at her tiny ears, a large medal bearing the image of the Madonna hung round her neck, and a black lace mantilla, depending from the comb and flowing over all, completed her attire.

The medal was of pure gold, and bore the inscription, "*O Marie, conçue sans péché, priez pour nous qui avons recours à vous,*" and was, as she afterwards informed Quentin, the gift of the Padre Trevino, who found it on the body of a Frenchman whom he had shot near Albuquerque.

"Did you ever taste a real Spanish olla, señor?" asked Baltasar, as the covers were removed, and the odour of a steaming and savoury dish pervaded the apartment.

Quentin declared that he had not.

"Then thou shalt taste it to-night. My sister is a famous cook," said Baltasar; "an olla she excels in—it was the favourite dish of our old father, the professor at Salamanca, and is the most noble dish in the world!"

"If Spanish, it must be," said Quentin, flatteringly.

"True," said Baltasar, gravely, while giving each of his enormous moustaches an upward twist; "we consider everything Spanish supremely good."

"We are rather a proud people you see, señor," said Donna Isidora, laughing; "and so far is pride carried, that to touch royalty is to die."

"Manuel Godoy touched royalty pretty often," said Trevino, with a grim smile, "and we never heard that Her Majesty of Spain resented it particularly."

"Did you ever hear of the escape of the sister of Philip III., senor?"

"I regret to say, Don Baltasar, that I never heard of Philip himself," replied Quentin.

"About two hundred years ago our royal family were residing at Aranjuez," said Baltasar, while filling his own and Quentin's glass with wine; "it is a country palace twenty miles south of Madrid, and is remarkable for its size and beauty. One night it caught fire; the court and all the attendants took to flight, leaving the youngest sister of Don Philip to perish. She was seen at one of the windows wringing her hands and imploring the saints to succour her, but a young arquebusier of the royal guard proved of more avail. He bravely dashed through the flames, raised her in his arms, and bore her forth in safety. But Spanish etiquette was shocked that the hand of a subject—of a man especially—had touched royalty; nay, worse, that he should have entered her bed-chamber, so the soldier was cast into a dungeon, chained to a heavy bar, and condemned to *die*! But the princess graciously pardoned him, and he was sent away to fight the Flemings under the Duke of Alva. His name was De Saldos, and from him we are descended."

Spanish etiquette made Donna Isidora rather silent and reserved; she somewhat uselessly addressed the old crone Donna Ximena from time to time, and that worthy matron only responded by mutterings, shaking her palsied head, or signing the cross beneath the table. At other times Isidora made an occasional remark to Trevino, by whom she was evidently greatly admired, for his keen stealthy eyes were seldom off her face, and a malevolent gleam shot from them whenever, in dispensing the courtesies of the table, she addressed Quentin Kennedy.

The past day's skirmish among the mountains, the capture and slaughter of the sixteen French prisoners, had appetized Baltasar and his three companions; and though Spanish cookery is seldom very excellent, Quentin was quite hungry enough to enjoy the olla podrida of beef, chicken, and bacon, boiled and sliced gourd, carrots, beans, red sausages, and Heaven knows what more, well peppered and spiced.

A few strings of rusks, a dish of raisins, with plenty of good Valdepenas in jolly flasks, closed the repast, after which the invariable cigars were resorted to, prior to repose.

As the whitewashed room, though scantily furnished, was close and warm, and as fighting was over for the night, Baltasar and

his comrades unbuttoned their jackets, and each disencumbered himself of a *peto* or wadding stuffing, which was supposed to turn a bullet, all the better that there was pasted thereon a coloured print of some local saint.

The conversation ran chiefly on the new war about to be waged by the allies in Spain, the various routes likely to be taken by the several divisions, the probable points of concentration, and so forth. These were chiefly discussed by Baltasar and his three companions, all of whom had already seen much service against the French. The extreme youth of Quentin, and his total ignorance of the country, made them somewhat ignore his presence, notwithstanding the important despatch he had brought, the scarlet coat he wore, and that he was the herald of that great strife that was not to cease, even at the Hill of Toulouse!

He sedulously avoided addressing or coming in contact in any way with the Padre Trevino, of whom he naturally had a proper horror, as an apostate priest who, exceeding his duty as a guerilla, became an assassin, and so coolly avowed his deadly design upon the father of Ribeaupierre.

The youth, the fair complexion, the gentleness of voice and eye the donna saw in Quentin, together with certain unmistakable signs of good breeding, when contrasted with the dark, fierce aspect and brusque bearing of those about her now, failed not to interest her deeply.

The solitary mission on which he had come; the distance from his own country, of the exact situation of which, in her strange Spanish notions of geography (though passably educated for a Castilian), she had not the slightest idea, for in those points her countrymen are not much improved since Vasco de Lobiera wrote of the fair Olinda taking ship in Norway, and sailing to the King of England's "Island of Windsor;" the knowledge that Quentin was come to fight, it might be to *die*, for her beloved Spain, all served to present him in a most favourable light to her very lovely eyes, which rested on him so frequently that the sharp-sighted Trevino more than once bit his ugly nether lip with suppressed irritation, while Quentin felt his pulses quicken with pleasure, for the dark little beauty, in her picturesque national costume, was a delightful object to gaze upon; thus, a longer residence than he intended in that mountain puebla might perhaps have led we are not prepared to say to what species of mischief.

As the wine circulated, and the conversation still turned on the war, Quentin ventured the remark—a perilous one amid such gentry—that he thought the scene he had recently witnessed was not favourable to the good success of the Spanish cause.

Every brow loured as he said this, and the gentle donna looked uneasy.

"Madre divina! you don't know what you talk about, senor," said Baltasar, gravely; "had you seen your countrymen, as I have mine, shot down in poor defenceless groups of thirty or forty at a time, on the open Prado of Madrid, you would think less harshly of us."

"And, senor," urged Isidora, in her soft and musical tones, "the poor people of the city were forced to illuminate their houses in honour of the sacrifice. Was not such cruelty horrible?"

"Horrible indeed, senora," replied Quentin, feeling that it really was so, though sooth to say he would have agreed with anything she might have advanced, for there was no withstanding those earnest eyes and that seductive voice.

"Light as noonday were the streets on that awful night," said Baltasar, as the fierce gleam came into his eyes and the pallor of passion passed over each of his sallow cheeks; "ten thousand lamps and candles shed their glare upon the heaps of slain, where women were searching for their husbands, children for parents, and parents for children, while the canon thundered from the Retiro, and the volleying musketry rang in many a street and square. What says the Junta of Seville in its address to the people of Madrid? 'We, all Spain, exclaim—the Spanish blood shed in Madrid cries aloud for revenge! Comfort yourselves, we are your brethren: we will fight like you until the last of us perish in defence of our king and country!' Senor, the massacres of the 2nd of May were a sight to shudder at—to treasure in the heart and to remember!"

"And by our holy Lady of Battles and of Covadonga, we are not likely to forget!" swore Trevino, striking the table with the hilt of his knife.

"The spirits of the Cid Rodrigo, of Pelayo the Asturian, and all the loyal and brave men of old, are among us again," said Baltasar, with enthusiasm, "and we shall crush the slaves of the Corsican to whom Manuel Godoy betrayed us!"

"Godoy," said a guerilla who had scarcely yet spoken, but who seemed inspired by the same ferocious spirit; "oh that I may yet some day dispatch him as Pinto Ribiero slew that similar traitor, Vasconcella the false Portuguese."

"Always blood!" thought Quentin, beginning to fear that from indulging in bluster and rodomontade, they might fall on him, were it for nothing more but to keep their hands in practice.

"I perceive you look frequently at my guitar," said Donna

Isidora, on seeing that Quentin evidently disliked the ferocious tone adopted by her brother and his companions; "do you sing, senor?"

"No, senora."

"Or play?"

"The guitar is scarcely known in my country; but if you would favour us——"

"With pleasure, senor," said she, with a charming smile.

"Bueno, Dora," said her brother, taking from its peg the guitar and handing it to her; on which she threw its broad scarlet riband over her shoulder, ran her white and slender fingers through the strings, and then a lovely Spanish picture, that Phillips might have doted on, was complete.

"What shall it be, Baltasar?" she asked; adding, with a swift glance at Quentin's scarlet coat, "'*Mia Madre no caro soldados aquí*'—eh?"

"Nay, Dora, that would scarcely be courteous to our guest, who is a soldier."

"What then, mi hermano?"

"Give us one of Lope de Vega's songs. There is that ballad which compliments the English king who came to seek a wife in Spain."

Then with great sweetness she sang Lope's verses, which begin—

"Carlos Stuardo soy,
Qui siendo amor mi guia,
Al cielo de Espana voy,
Por ver mi estrella Maria."

While she sang, Quentin thought of the old Jacobite enthusiasm of Lady Winifred and Lord Rohallion, and how they would have admired alike the song and the singer; and while his eyes were fixed on her soft pale face and thick downcast eyelashes, he neither heard the accompaniment Baltasar beat with a pair of castanets, or by the Padre Trevino with the haft of a remarkably ugly knife, which seemed alike his favourite weapon and plaything.

In a few minutes after this they had all separated for the night, and Quentin, without undressing, as he proposed to start early on the following morning, stretched on a hard pallet and muffled in his great-coat, with his sabre and pistols under his head, soon sank into slumber, the sound, deep slumber induced by intense fatigue; and from this not even the horrors of the recent massacre, the luring visage of the suspicious Trevino, the voice, the eyes, of the lovely young donna, or any other memory, could disturb him.

CHAPTER LII.

THE JOURNEY.

"Meanwhile the gathering clouds obscure the skies,
From pole to pole the forky lightning flies,
The rattling thunders roll, and Juno pours
A wintry deluge down and sounding showers;
The company dispersed to coverts ride,
And seek the homely cots or mountain side."

ÆNEIS, iv.

FROM this long and dreamless sleep Quentin Kennedy started and awoke next morning, but not betimes, as the sun's altitude, when shining on the whitewashed walls of the posada, informed him. He sprang up and proceeded to make a hasty toilet.

"Breakfast, a guide, and then to be gone!" thought he, joyfully.

On issuing from his scantily-furnished chamber into the large room of the posada, or rather what was once the posada, he found a number of the guerillas busy making up ball-cartridges. Heaps of loose powder lay on the oak table, and the nonchalant makers were smoking their cigars over it as coolly as if it were only brickdust or oatmeal.

The guitar that hung by its broad scarlet riband from a peg on the wall, brought to memory all the episodes of last night, and Quentin sighed when reflecting that a girl so lovely as its owner should be lost among such society, for to him, those patriot volunteers of his Majesty Ferdinand VII. had very much the air and aspect of banditti.

He looked forth from the open windows into the street of the puebla; the morning was a lovely one. The unclouded sun shone joyously on the bright green mountain sides, while a pleasant breeze shook the autumnal foliage of the woods, and tossed the large and now yellow leaves of the ancient vines that covered all the walls of the old posada, growing in at each door and opening; but Quentin could not repress a shudder when he saw the four large graves at the foot of the archway, for the faces and forms of the poor victims came before his eye in fancy with painful distinctness—the rigid figure of the grey-haired captain, the other officer who wept for his wife and children, the conscript whom they named Louis—the manly and unflinching courage of all!

Baltasar de Saldos twisted up his enormous whiskerando-lik moustaches, and smiled grimly as only a taciturn Spaniard can

smile, when he perceived this, as he conceived it to be, childish emotion of his guest.

"The ladies await us, senor," said Baltasar; and Quentin, on turning, found the dark and deeply-lashed eyes of Isidora bent on his, as she smilingly presented her plump little hand to be kissed, and then the same party who had met last night again seated themselves at table, and a slight breakfast of thick chocolate, eggs, and white bread, was rapidly discussed. As soon as it was over, the brilliant young donna and the withered old one withdrew, bidding Quentin farewell, and adding that as he was to depart so soon, they should see him no more.

Quentin, with a heart full of pleasure, belted on his sabre and assumed his forage cap; he also drew the charges of his pistols and loaded them anew.

"And now, Don Baltasar, with a thousand thanks for your kindness, I shall take my departure," said he. "But how about a guide to avoid the main road, and escape the enemy's patrols?"

"As we are so soon to leave this, and commence active and desperate operations, the end or extent of which none of us can foresee, the Padre Trevino, who is the very model and mirror of sons, has decided on sending that excellent lady his mother (a slight smile spread over the Spaniard's sombre visage as he spoke) across the frontier for safety. She goes to the convent of Engracia, at Portalegre; and, as she knows the whole country hereabouts as if it were her own inheritance, she shall be your guide."

"She—Donna Trevino?" exclaimed Quentin, who was by no means enchanted by the offer of such an encumbrance.

"Si, senor. You will be sure to take great care of her."

"But—but, Don Baltasar, that old dame! (devil he had nearly said)—why not send one of your band?"

"I cannot spare a single man. Spain will need them all. The senora is very deaf and old, you need scarcely ever address her, and, as she is taciturn, she will not incommode you. Besides our Spanish mistrust of strangers, she has—excuse me, senor—a horror of all who are beyond the pale of the Church."

"But, senor," urged poor Quentin, "to travel for two or three days with a deaf old lady!"

"What are you speaking of, senor? We are only a little more than thirty miles from Portalegre as a bird flies. You lost your way, and rambled sadly in coming here; but I shall mount her on a mule, and you on a horse, and you may easily be there, even though proceeding by the most steep and devious route, before the sun sets."

"To-night!"

"Exactly. There is, as you are aware, a vast difference in travelling on horseback with a guide, and a-foot, in a strange country, without one."

"I thank, you, *senor*, said Quentin, considerably relieved, "and shall commit myself to the guidance of the old lady, though I fear that she views me with no favourable eye."

"Here come your cattle."

"A noble horse, by Jove!"

"I have filled your canteen with *agnardiente*."

"Thanks, *senor*."

"I know that you *Inglesos* can neither march nor fight, as we *Spaniards* do, on mere cold water, with the whiff of a cigar."

They were now at the door of the *posada*, where a group of dark, idle, slouching, and somewhat villanous-looking *guerillas* were loitering, to witness the departure.

"Ah, if these fellows only knew that my pockets were so well lined with *moidores*!" thought Quentin.

Lazarillo held the horse (which had evidently been a French cavalry charger) and the mule by their bridles. The former had a fine switch tail, which was now tied or doubled up in the Spanish fashion, as he had to perform a journey. The latter was a tall, sleek, and handsome animal, whose figure indicated great speed and strength.

The saddles were Moorish (the fashion still in Spain), made with high peak and croup behind; the stirrup-irons were triangular boxes, and the bridles, bridoons, and cruppers, with their brass bosses, scarlet fringes, tassels, and trumpery ornaments, closely resembled the harness of the circus.

At the pommel of the horse's saddle, hung a leather bottle of wine, and behind was a handsome *alforja*, or travelling bag, ornamented with an infinity of tassels, and containing bread, sausages, a boiled fowl, and other edibles to be consumed on the journey. Nothing was forgotten, and as Quentin mounted his horse, the old lady was led forth by *Trevino*, who, with *Baltasar's* assistance, lifted her into the mule's saddle.

The venerable *donna* was muffled up in a large loose garment of striped stuff, purple and white; it covered her from head to foot, and but for her thick veil, which entirely concealed her withered visage, she might have passed for an old *Bedouin* in a burnous.

"*Senor*, this lady is one in whom I am so deeply interested," said *Trevino*, with the keen, fierce, and impressive glance peculiar to him, and with a hand, by force of habit, perhaps, on his knife, "I say, one in whom I am so deeply interested, that I trust to

your care and honour in seeing her, without hindrance or delay, safe to Portalegre."

"I shall see her safe to the gate of the Engracia convent," said Quentin; "and how about returning the cattle, Don Baltasar?"

"Leave them there, too—my free gift to the convent. And now, adios," said he, with a low bow; "doubtless we shall meet again when the army is in motion."

"I hope not," muttered Quentin. "Adios, senores."

A few minutes more and they had left the puebla, with its lawless garrison, its cannon, and earthen bastions, on which the scarlet and yellow ensign of Castile and Leon was waving, far behind them, and were riding at a rapid trot down the green mountain path which Quentin had travelled alone last night.

Soon he saw the place where the road branched off to Valencia, and where he had parted from Ribeaupierre; and, ere long, he passed the dead horse, already torn and disembowelled by the wolves or the wandering dogs which infested all the wild parts of Estremadura.

How changed were the scene, the circumstance, and the companionship since he had last been in the saddle, cantering along the road to Maybole, escorting Flora Warrender!

Leaving this path, and striking off to the left, Donna Ximena, to whose guidance he silently and implicitly committed himself, and who rode a little way in front, managing her mule with ease, and, considering her years, with undoubted grace, conducted him up a steep and narrow track that led into the wildest part of the mountains, where the summits of slaty granite were already beginning to be powdered by frost and snow in the early hours of morning, and where the valleys, which the industry of the Moors made gardens that teemed with fertility and beauty, are now desert wastes, abounding only in rank pasturage.

Their cattle soon became blown, and, as the pleasant breeze that fanned the foliage in the forenoon, had already died away, and been succeeded by an oppressive and sultry closeness, they proceeded slowly, and now Quentin thought he might venture to converse a little with his silent companion, for the monotony of travelling thus became tiresome in the extreme.

"Donna Ximena," said he, as their nags walked slowly up the mountain path. "Donna Ximena!" he repeated, in a louder key, before she said, without turning her head—

"Well, senor?"

"It surprises me much that Don Baltasar permits a girl so lovely as his sister to reside among those dangerous guerillas."

To this remark the haughty old lady made no response, so, raising his voice, he added—

"He may now be without a home to leave her in; but, certainly, Isidora is, without exception, the most beautiful and winning girl I ever saw—in her own style, at least," he concluded, as he thought of Flora Warrender.

He had to shout this remark at the utmost pitch of his voice before the old lady replied, with a gloved hand at her right ear,—

"Yes, senor—she put a large and beautiful sausage into the alforja."

"Bother the old frump!" said Quentin; then shouting louder still, he added, "Your head, senora, is so muffled in that mantle and veil, that it is quite impossible you can hear me."

"Where you speaking, senor?"

"The devil! I should think so—yes!"

"Speak louder."

"I cannot possibly speak louder, senora; but I was remarking the danger that might accrue to a girl of such wonderful beauty as Donna Isidora among the companions of her brother."

"It is Valdepenas, senor."

"What is Valdepenas?"

"The wine in the bota—taste it if you wish—I filled it for you."

Quentin relinquished in despair any further attempt to make himself heard or understood, and for some miles they proceeded, as before, in total silence, while the gathering of the clouds betokened a storm, and Quentin was certain he heard thunder at a distance; but a few minutes after, the sound proved to be that of a brass drum reverberating between the mountain slopes! As these drums were then used by the French alone, he instinctively reined up, and his silent guide, to whom he did not deem it worth while to communicate his alarm, did so too.

"Ah—you heard that my venerable friend," said he aloud.

The sound now became continuous and steady, and his horse, an old trooper we have said, snorted and pricked up his ears intelligently. It was the regular but monotonous beating of a single drummer, who was timing the quickstep for the troops in the old fashion still retained by the French, when on the line of march, as it proves an excellent method, in lieu of other music, for getting soldiers rapidly on.

Desirous of reconnoitring, Quentin somewhat unceremoniously pushed his horse past the mule of his fair, but exceedingly tire-some companion, and dismounting, led it forward by the bridle.

The path, rugged and narrow, here went right over the steep crest of a hill between some volcanic rocks that were covered with dark-green clumps of the Portuguese laurel and wild olive tree; and from thence it dipped abruptly down into a little green valley where stood a farm-house in ruins.

There by the wayside was a human skull, white and bleached, stuck upon the summit of a pole, the grim memorial of some act of retributive justice for murder and robbery.

Proceeding slowly and listening intently as he went, for the sound of the drum was coming every moment nearer, Quentin peeped over the eminence and found himself almost face to face with the first section of the advanced guard of a French regiment of infantry; they were scarcely a hundred yards distant, and were toiling up the steep ascent.

In heavy marching order, with their blankets and blue great-coats rolled, they were clad in long white tunics of coarse linen, with large red epaulettes, high bearskin caps, each with a scarlet plume on the left side; the legs of their scarlet trousers were rolled up above the ankles; all had their muskets slung, and they were chatting, laughing, smoking, and marching, some with their hands in their pockets, and others arm-in-arm, in that slouching and free manner peculiar to all troops when "marching at ease," but more especially to the French.

On seeing the alarming sight, Quentin leaped on his horse, and cried—

"Away, Donna Ximena for your life—here are a body of the enemy—we shall be either shot or taken prisoners!"

And very ungallantly caring little whether his venerable friend, the mother of the worthy Trevino, fell into the hands of the French, provided that *he* escaped them, Quentin goaded the sides of his horse with his Spanish stirrup-irons, and lashed its flanks with a switch which he had torn from an olive tree.

It sprang off with a wild bound; the lady's mule also struck out, and away they went headlong down the mountain side together at a break-neck pace, followed by shouts from the French, the first section of whom were now on the crest of the eminence, and who unslung their muskets and opened a fire upon them.

Every shot rung with a hundred reverberations between the mountain peaks; Quentin, however, never looked back, but rode recklessly and breathlessly on, thinking as the old lady scoured after him on her mule, and as he lashed his horse without mercy, that he somewhat resembled Tam-o'-Shanter pursued by Cuttie Sark.

There was no contingency of war of which he had a greater horror than that of becoming a prisoner. If taken by the enemy, years might pass on and still find them in their hands, and when released or exchanged, he would be little better than a private soldier—not so good, in fact. His time for promotion would be irrevocably past, and all the stories he had heard of the sufferings to which the French Republican and Imperial officers subjected our troops when prisoners in the impregnable citadel of Bitche,

the fortress of Verdun, and elsewhere, crowded on his mind, with a consciousness of the beggared and hopeless life to which the event might ultimately consign him, even if he survived the captivity, which, in his restless and irritable horror of all restraint, he very much doubted.

Fortunately for him the long-barrelled muskets of the French infantry were very dissimilar to Enfield rifles in the precision of their fire; thus, he and his companion were soon beyond all range, and an opaque vapour, alternately between purple and brown in its tint, that descended on the mountains, while a storm of blinding rain and bellowing wind broke forth, put an end to all chance of pursuit; but they rode on fully ten miles without knowing in what direction, when the fury of the storm compelled them to take refuge in a thicket.

Dismounting, Quentin was too breathless and blown to attempt to outbellow the wind in making excuses to old Donna Ximena; he simply lifted that good lady off her mule, and conducted her under the stately chestnut trees, which gave them shelter. He then unslung the bota and the alforja from his crusader-like demipique, and was proceeding to secure the bridles of their nags to a branch, when there burst a shriek from his companion, with the exclamation—

“Madre divina! O Madre de Dios!”

At that instant there shot forth a terrific glare which seemed to envelop them, and to fill the whole thicket with dazzling light, showing every knot and twisted branch, and every gnarled stem. Then there was a tremendous crash, as a thunderbolt ground a giant chestnut to pieces, literally splitting its solid trunk from top to bottom; next rang the roar of the thunder peal as it rolled away over the vapour-hidden mountain peaks, leaving the dense and murky air full of sulphurous heat and odour.

Stunned by the torrent of sound, and half blinded by the lurid glare, more than a minute elapsed before Quentin discovered that, startled alike by the flash and thunder-clap, the horse and mule had torn their bridles from his hands and galloped madly away, he knew not whither.

Even the faintest sound of their hoofs could no longer be heard amid the ceaseless hiss of the descending rain, every drop of which was nearly the size of a walnut; so now, there were he and old Donna Ximena (who crept closer to him than he cared for) left a-foot he knew not where, in that gloomy thicket, evening coming on and night to follow, a storm raging, and the French in motion in the neighbourhood!

“Here’s a devil of a mess!” sighed poor Quentin.

CHAPTER LIII.

A SURPRISE.

"*Preciosa*. Is this a dream? O, if it be a dream,
Let me sleep on, and do not wake me yet
Repeat thy story! say I'm not deceived!
Say that I do not dream! I am awake;
This is the gipsy camp; and this is Victorian."

The Spanish Student.

To address or to consult his old and deaf companion would have been worse than useless, so Quentin angrily sat down to reflect, and, unfortunately, in sitting down, did so on a prickly pear. Now, there are more pleasant sensations in the world than to sit upon such an esculent, or a Scots thistle (when one is inclined to ponder and to "chew the cud of sweet and bitter fancy"), with their bristling stamens, especially if one wears the stocking-web regimental pantaloons then worn; so Quentin sprang up, and issuing from the thicket, perceived with great satisfaction, that though the rain was then falling, the clouds were rising and the wind abating; in fact that the storm, which had most probably concealed their flight from the French, was gradually passing away; but whether or not, one fact was evident—that the donna and he must pass the night in the thicket.

It was fortunate that he had rendered the flight of their cattle of less consequence, by previously securing the bota of wine and the bag of provisions, and also that he had ridden with his pistols at his girdle, and not in holsters.

As the light increased a little when the clouds dispersed, he perceived a ruined arch, the use or origin of which it would be difficult to determine. It seemed to be a portion of a small aqueduct or vault, Roman, Gothic, or Moorish perhaps—anything but Spanish. It stood amid the great old trees of the chestnut grove, and was half hidden by the luxuriant grass, the gorgeous wild flowers, and odoriferous creepers. It was about six feet in height, but several more in depth, and heaps of fallen masonry, covered with moss and lavender-flowers, enclosed it on one side.

Quentin examined the ruin, and finding it strewed with dry and withered leaves, blown thither by the wind, he led in his trembling companion, who seated herself near him, and with muttcred thanks drank a mouthful of wine from the bota, while he drew forth the contents of the alforja, to wit, a huge loaf of fine white bread, a boiled fowl, and a red sausage, that, of course,

smelt villanously of garlic. It was in vain, however, that he pressed Donna Ximena to partake of the guerillas' good cheer. The old lady had evidently no objection to a comforting drop of the generous Valdepenas, but when he offered her food she only buried her head in her veil and rocked herself to and fro, as if overcome by weariness or alarm.

Placing his mouth near her ear, Quentin endeavoured, by roaring as if he were in a gale of wind at sea, to discover if she knew whereabouts they were—whether near Valencia de Alcantara or Albuquerque; whether near Marvao or San Vincente; whether on the Spanish or Portuguese side of the frontier; but she only shook her head, and made signs of the cross, as the twilight deepened.

Quentin thought that Don Baltasar had certainly selected his guide, as the Dean of St. Patrick counselled all housemaids should be, for their years and lack of personal charms.

"By Jove—the plot thickens!" said he, as he tugged away at a drumstick of the boiled galina and consoled himself with a hearty pull at the bota, while his companion laid her old muffled head on a heap of leaves, and appeared to fall sound asleep; at least Quentin never cared to inquire whether she was so or not.

There were moments when he seriously considered whether he was not justified in marching off quietly without beat of drum, and leaving this venerable bore to shift for herself, while he made the best of his way to Portalegre, as he had left it, a-foot; but there seemed to be something so ungallant and ungenerous in leaving an elderly female (not that the fact of her being the maternal parent of Padre Trevino enhanced her value) alone, in such a place and at night too, that he resolved to wait till morning dawned, and then he would see what a night might bring forth; and this resolution he formed all the more readily that the rain was still pouring in a ceaseless torrent.

Hour after hour passed in silence, no sound coming to his ear save the monotonous patter of the rain falling on the brown autumnal leaves; to Quentin it proved alike a weary and dreary time, until the shower began to abate, and for the first time in his life he heard a nightingale pouring its plaintive and varying notes upon the air.

Quentin placed their provender and his pistols in a dry place, gathered a heap of flowers for a pillow, and coiling himself up at the other end of the ruin, *i.e.*, as far away as possible from old Donna Ximena, he followed her example and courted sleep.

With the first blink of the day he started from his nest of leaves. Grey dawn was stealing between the great rough stems of the chestnut wood. The rain and the wind were over; the

vapours of the night had dispersed, and no trace remained of the past storm save the scathed and thunder-riven tree, the ruins of which were scattered around its root.

The green slopes of the distant hills were visible, dotted by the drenched merino sheep, thousands of which are annually driven into Estremadura, to fatten on the rich wild grass of its pastures. In the distance, and darkly defined against the increasing pink and violet tints of the sky, were two windmills, quaint and old, like those which the Knight of La Mancha assailed; their wheels were broken, and the fans hung motionless and in tatters.

A herd of wild swine rushed through the grove, snorting and grunting in their headlong career, but the Donna Trevino still slept soundly, if Quentin might judge by her breathing, which was low and regular. After stepping forth to reconnoitre, and finding the whole vicinity of the thicket silent, and no appearance of either friend or foe on the roads in any direction, he deemed this the wisest and safest time to set forth, and returned to wake his companion, whom he really began to wish—we shall not say where, or with whom—but safe at least with her son, the Padre Trevino.

On approaching he perceived that the loose and ample garment of alternate white and purple stripes in which she was enveloped, was partly deranged, and the thick black lace veil which covered her head was open in front, for now one half of it floated over her right shoulder. Then, on drawing nearer, how great was his astonishment to behold in the sleeper, *not* the wrinkled and withered visage of the deaf old woman, whom all yesterday and all last night he supposed to be his bore and companion, whom he had left to shift for herself when the French appeared, and from whom he had crept as far away as possible in the singular den they tenanted—not the faded visage, we say, of Donna Ximena, but the pale and delicately cut features, the wondrously long black eyelashes, and the lovely little face of Donna Isidora!

The red pouting lips were parted, and the pearly teeth below were visible, imparting to her expression a charming air of child-like innocence and repose. Ungloved now, one white and slender hand, grasping her gathered veil, was pressed upon her bosom; her left cheek reposed upon her outstretched arm, and the partial disarrangement of her picturesque costume, as she had turned in her sleep, left visible rather more than her short Spanish skirts usually revealed of two remarkably pretty ankles, cased in their tight scarlet stockings.

The hardships to which her brother's recent guerilla life had

subjected her, evidently enabled the adventurous girl to "rough it," as soldiers say; thus she still slept soundly, while Quentin, half kneeling down, surveyed with wonder, perplexity, and pleasure, the beauties thus suddenly revealed by the open veil.

Touching her hand, he awoke her.

She started up with an exclamation of alarm, and her hand seemed instinctively to feel for the bodkin which confined her hair. Aware that she was discovered now, she assumed a sitting posture, threw back her thick veil, and a singular expression, half angry and half droll, came into her dark eyes, as she said—

"You have been looking at me as I slept! Was it proper to penetrate my disguise, senor?"

"Pardon me, senora; I did not, indeed; I came but to wake you, and found your veil open; could I refrain from looking—from admiring?"

"And you have discovered me——"

"To be young and beautiful——"

"When you thought me old and hideous—is it not so?" she asked, laughing.

"I confess it, and with pleasure, senora. This is very enchanting—but what romance is it—what absurd comedy is this you are acting?"

"Absurd?"

"Pardon me again; but though it is a game or drama that charms me very much, it is not without peril."

"To whom?"

"To both—perhaps most of all to you, senora."

She replied only by a haughty smile, so Quentin continued—

"Now we shall make our way together delightfully to Portalegre, and there can be no more deafness; or can it be that you and Donna Ximena changed places here in the night? Oh, tell me what does all this mean?"

"I shall tell you, senor," said the now blushing girl; "it means simply that my brother was most anxious that I, and not Donna Ximena, should reach the St. Engracia convent, as a place of permanent safety till these wars and tumults are over. He also wished to supply you with a guide to Portalegre, where, but for the loss of our horses, we should have been last night. Thus my brother——"

"Deemed that as old Donna Ximena you would be safer with me than in your own character?"

"Exactly," she replied, laughing; "we thought there would be little chance of your attentions annoying her."

"Do you imagine that when the French appeared I would have

turned my horse's head and left *you* without thought or ceremony, as I left her—she whom I considered an old, deaf bore and encumbrance? You have acted well your part, senora. How you made me roar and shout, as if I was commanding a whole brigade!”

“And now, senor, that you know I am *not* Donna Ximena, will you respect me the less?”

“On the contrary, I shall respect you a great deal more,” said Quentin with enthusiasm, as he took her hand in his; but she withdrew it as if to adjust her veil.

“Then, am I to understand that in your country, youth is more honourable than age?”

“Nay, it is not, but youth is more pleasing, certainly.”

“You have been most kind to me, senor.”

“Kind, senora?” Quentin thought she was quizzing him.

“Yes; I cannot forget how, even as old Ximena, you lifted me from my mule, conveyed me in here, made a couch and pillow for me, and so forth. *Beso usted la mano, caballero* (I kiss your hand, sir),” she added, taking his hand in hers.

“Oh, Donna Isidora, I cannot permit you to do this—unless——”

“Do you not know the customs of Castile? Well, unless what?”

“You permit me to kiss yours.”

“How simple! there, senor,” she added, presenting a very lovely little hand, which he pressed to his lips.

“Your cheek now—ah, you will permit me?” urged Quentin, becoming a little bewildered by the whole situation, and by the clear dark eyes that looked so softly into his.

“Do so, senor.”

Quentin was promptly pressing forward, when the point of a very unpleasant-looking little stiletto met his cheek!

“Senora,” he exclaimed, “what do you mean?”

“That I shall stab you to the heart if you molest me—that is all?” said she, as a gleam came into her dark eyes that vividly reminded Quentin of Baltasar.

“So, so, senora,” said Quentin, with an air of pique, “you are certainly able to take care of yourself.”

“I live in times when it is necessary I should be so,” was the dry retort.

Quentin surveyed her with growing interest, for her beauty was very remarkable in its delicacy and darkness. She had a short crimson upper lip, that seemed to quiver with every passing thought, for she was an impressionable, enthusiastic, and high-spirited girl. After a pause,

"Now that you have done admiring me, I suppose," said she, "you will kindly say what we are to-do?"

"How?"

"We cannot remain here among the leaves, like a couple of gitanos, or two rooks in search of a nest."

"We shall continue our journey to Portalegre, with your permission, senora; and now that you have recovered your hearing, and that I am not obliged to bellow like a madman, you will perhaps, if in your power, tell me where we are?"

Donna Isidora laughed and presented her hand; Quentin assisted her to rise, and on issuing from the ruined arch, she looked about her for some time.

"By those two windmills," said she, "I know that we are not far from Salorino."

"A town, senora?"

"Yes; it lies at the base of yonder lofty mountain, on the left bank of the river Salor."

"Is it large?"

"A considerable place for manufactures. This purple and white striped woollen stuff is made there; but the town must be avoided, as it is occupied by a troop of Polish Lancers."

"Then did we ride the wrong way in the rain last night?"

"Yes; we are still fully thirty miles from Portalegre."

"Thirty miles yet, senora!"

"Yes, and Valencia de Alcantara, where the French Light Cavalry are, lies exactly midway, on the main road, between us and it."

Quentin's heart sunk at this information.

"You are certain of all this, senora?" said he, laying his hand lightly on her arm.

"Quite, senor."

"We cannot—you, at least, cannot—proceed thirty miles on foot; so what in heaven's name shall we do?" said Quentin in great perplexity.

"The Conde de Maciera, who serves in my brother's band of guerillas as captain of a hundred lancers, has a villa at the foot of yonder hill near the Salor; I remember that the wildest bull we ever had in the arena at Salamanca came from thence. The place is scarcely two miles distant from this, and could we but reach it, doubtless some of his domestics might assist us."

"The idea is excellent; let us set out at once!"

"Be advised by me, senor, and take some breakfast first," said the Spanish girl, laughing; "it is a custom we guerillas have, always to eat when provisions can be had, lest we halt where there are none."

Quentin at once assented, and opening the alforja produced the

fowl and other edibles, on which they made a slight repast before setting forth.

Seating herself within the ruined arch, her head reclining upon her left hand, Isidora displayed to perfection a lovely rounded arm, and a pair of taper ankles and little feet, towards which Quentin's eyes wandered from time to time.

"You look at me very earnestly, senora," said he, while his cheek reddened and his heart fluttered on finding the dark searching eyes of the young donna fixed on him more than once.

"There is, I can see, a sad expression in your eyes, senor."

"Do you think so?" asked Quentin, smiling.

"Yes."

"But how, or why do you suppose so?"

"I don't know; I perceive that you are a mere boy (*muchacho*), and yet—and yet——"

"What, senora?"

"Ave Maria purissima! I can't say—there is something that speaks to me of thought, reflection, care beyond your years."

"It may well be so, dear senora; I have never known a relative in the world; I have been an orphan from infancy, and——"

"And now," said she, presenting him with her hand, "you are a soldier who comes to fight for Spain!"

"And for *you*, too, senora," he added, as he touched her fingers with his lips, and with a devotion that somewhat surprised himself. "But are you afraid of me, as old Donna Ximena was?"

"No—why do you think I am?"

"You sign the cross so often."

"Because, senor—excuse me, but the morning air is excessively chilly here, and I yawn frequently."

"And you do so?——"

"For fear Santanas should dart down my throat unseen and unfelt. It is a belief—superstition you may deem it—that we have in Castile; though you, perhaps, who have, unfortunately, been educated among heretics, may know neither the dread nor the holy sign. I know that it is not used in your country, senor—because I can read."

"I should think so," said Quentin, amused by her simplicity; "is not every lady educated?"

"No—not in Spain."

"Why?"

"Lest, if handsome, they should write to their lovers."

"And yet, senora, they had the rashness to teach you."

"Do you mean that I am handsome, or that I must have lovers?"

"I mean both—that being the first of necessity leads to your possessing the last."

"My poor father, the good old professor, who was so barbarously slain by the French, was careful to teach me many things, though our female literary accomplishments are usually confined to our prayers and rehearsing legends of the saints, songs of the Cid Rodrigo, or by Lope de la Vega. In England I believe you have women who could lead the Junta or shine in the Cortes itself; but what matters their education, when it only serves to confirm their heresies? And now, senor, place the bota in the alforja, and sling that over your shoulder; let us go, and I shall be your guide to Villa de Maciera."

CHAPTER LIV.

THE VILLA DE MACIERA.

"Innocence makes him careless now.

* * * *

Youth hath its whimsies, nor are we,
To examine all their paths too strictly:

We went awry *ourselves* when we were young."

Old Tragedy.

DONNA ISIDORA had now divested herself of the large and loose woollen weed in which she had travelled yesterday, and threw it gracefully over her arm. In her short but amply flounced skirt she tripped—as we are writing of a Spanish girl we should have it glided—along by the side of Quentin, who moderated his space to suit hers.

The rain of last night had completely laid the dust; the morning air was cool and delightful, and save a Franciscan friar of Medellin, travelling like themselves on foot, with a canvas wallet slung on his back and a long knotted staff in his hand, they met no one.

The heavy clouds were banking up from the westward, but the sky was beautiful overhead, and, refreshed by the torrents of last night, every herb, flower, and leaf wore their brightest hues. The Salor, a river which flows from the mountains southward of Caceres, in Estremadura, and joins the Tagus near Rosmanihal, in the province of Beira, and the bed of which frequently becomes quite dry in summer, now came in sight, swollen by the recent rains, and flowing red and muddy between groves of olive trees, which were still in full leaf, as in those regions the olive harvest usually occurs about the month of December.

On the surface of the rushing river the large flowers of the white and purple lotus floated, or sunk to rise again, bobbing in the eddies; and some brightly feathered birds, though summer was long since past, twittered about, filling the air with melody and song.

But the western clouds, we have said, came gathering fast and heavily, and in sombre masses that alternated between purple and inky grey, while the wind rose in hot or cold puffs that gradually grew to gusts; and these, with other indications that rough weather was again at hand, made the two pedestrians hasten on.

Ere they crossed the old Roman bridge that spans the Salor, by arches that must whilom have echoed to the marching legions of Quintus Sertorius, the sound of distant thunder was heard among the mountains, and then the clouds gathered so fast, that ere long every vestige of blue was completely hidden in the sky.

"If rain comes, what a situation for you, Donna Isidora!" said Quentin, turning to his companion, to whose usually colourless cheek, the early morning air and the exercise of walking had imparted a lovely flush; in fact she seemed radiantly beautiful!

"Oh, fear not for me, senor, though to have one's only dress wetted, is rather unpleasant," she replied; "besides, the villa of the Conde is close at hand."

At that moment one or two large drops of warm rain plashed on the road they traversed, causing them to quicken their steps.

Striking off from the main highway, Isidora led Quentin between two gate pillars, each of which was surmounted by a marble lion, seated on its haunches, with its fore paws resting on a shield. This gave access to an avenue, where two rows of giant beeches, now brown and yellow, mingled with ilex (whose leaves seem as red as blood when viewed in the sunshine), cast their shadows on two lesser rows of dense and dark-leaved Portuguese laurels, myrtle and wild gentian; but in this silent and untrodden avenue, the rank grass and weeds were already sprouting.

"This is the villa," said Donna Isidora, as they came suddenly in sight of a château of very imposing aspect; "but Madre Maria! what is this? It seems quite deserted!"

A double flight of white marble steps led from a green lawn to a noble terrace, the balustrades of which were elaborately carved, and had at regular intervals square pedestals bearing each an enormous porphyry vase filled with flowers that diffused a delicious aroma. From the architecture of the villa, a large square mansion with wings, which rose from the plateau of this stately terrace, and by its Palladian style, many of the pediments, cornices, capitals, and especially the statues that adorned it, seemed to have been taken from the various Roman ruins in the vicinity.

Around this terrace was a row of orange trees, the fruit of which had never been gathered, as it lay in heaps under each, just as it had fallen from the branches when dead ripe.

The plashing water of a beautiful bronze fountain, where four

Tritons shot each a jet of pure crystal from a trumpet-shaped conch into a yellow marble basin, alone broke the silence and stillness of the place. Torn from its elaborate hinges, the front door lay flat on the tessellated marble floor of the vestibule, having evidently been beaten in by the simple application of a large stone which still lay above it; and the tendrils of the gorgeous acacias that covered the front wall of the villa, had already begun to find their way in at the open door, and to creep through the shattered windows.

"The French have been here!" said Isidora, with a dark expression in her eyes; "De Ribeaupierre's dragoons have done this."

"The villa is quite deserted, senora," said Quentin, as they stood in irresolution and perplexity on the terrace. "How far are we from Salorino?"

"Six miles at least."

Quentin hallooed loudly two or three times, but the echoes of the tenantless abode alone responded, and the deathlike stillness there made Isidora shrink close to his side.

"I was not prepared for this," she said, while her eyes filled with tears; "yet what else can we expect while a Frenchman remains alive on this side of the Pyrenees?" she added, bitterly.

"There seems to be no living thing here, senora; not even a household dog."

"What shall we do, senor?" she asked, earnestly.

"Whatever we do ultimately, senora, we must take shelter now, for here comes the storm again, and with vengeance, too!"

So intent had they been in observing the indications of desertion and decay about this noble villa, that they had failed to see how fast the storm had gathered round them. A gust of wind tore past the edifice, strewing the terrace with withered acacia flowers and orange leaves, and then the rain descended in torrents, driving the travellers for shelter into the open vestibule.

In blinding sheets it rushed along the earth, from which it seemed to rise again like smoke or mist, then the thunder hurtled across the darkening sky, and the yellow lightning played like wild-fire about the bare granite scalps of the distant sierras, throwing forward every peak in strong outline from the dusky masses of cloud, amid which they "were an instant seen, and instant lost."

"*Madre de Dios!* there seems a fatality in all this!" exclaimed Isidora, as the overstrained and half Moorish ideas of etiquette and female propriety which prevail in Spain and Portugal occurred to her; then, looking at Quentin, while a

blush suffused her cheek, she added, "to be wandering in this manner is a most awkward situation, especially for me."

Quentin made some well-bred reply, he knew not what; but with all its awkwardness he felt that "the situation had its charm," as he took her hand and suggested that they should investigate the premises and see whether the villa was really so deserted as it appeared.

From the splendid vestibule, the lofty walls and rich cornices of which were covered with armorial bearings of the past Condes de Maciera, many of their escutcheons being collared by the orders of Santiago de Compostella, Santiago de Montesa, the Dove of Castile, and the Golden Fleece, with the crossed batons that showed how many had of old commanded the Monteros de Espinosa, or Ancient Archers of the Spanish Royal Guard, Quentin and Donna Isidora ascended a marble stair to a large corridor, off which several suites of apartments opened, and through these they proceeded, every moment fearful of coming suddenly upon some sight of horror, as the French were seldom slow in using their bayonets against any household that received them unwillingly, and the battered state of the entrance door showed that the villa had been entered forcibly.

The great corridor, like many of the rooms, was hung with portraits of grisly saints and meek-eyed Madonnas, and of many a lank-visaged and long-bearded hidalgo, with breast-plate, high ruff, and bowl-hilted toledo, looking with calm pride, or it might be defiance, from the flapping canvas, which had been slashed in mere wantonness by the sabres of the French dragoons.

Save that a number of chairs were overthrown, that several lockfast places had been broken open, and that many empty bottles strewed the floors, the furniture appeared to have been left untouched. The gilt clocks on the marble mantel-pieces ticked no more, and the spiders had spun their webs over the hour-hands and dials, thus showing that the villa must have been deserted by the family and servants of the count for some weeks. The damask sofas and ottomans were covered with dust, and many books lay strewn about on the dry and now musty esparto grass that covered some of the floors, which were nearly all of highly polished oak.

Quentin picked up a lady's white kid glove, and a black fan covered with silver spangles.

"These have belonged to the mother of the Conde, who resided here; where can the poor lady have fled—what may have become of her?" said Isidora as they wandered on, her voice and Quentin's sounding strange and hollow in the emptiness of the great villa.

All the bed-chambers were untouched, save in some instances where a mirror or cheval glass was starred or smashed by a pistol-shot; and so, ere long, the visitors in their search found themselves in the chapel, a little Gothic oratory of very florid architecture, which had evidently formed a portion of a much older edifice than the present villa; for there, on a pedestal tomb, having a row of carved weepers round it, and little niches and sockets for twelve votive lamps, lay side by side the effigies of two knights in chain-armour, with their cross-hilted swords and military girdles on, and their hands folded in prayer. Quentin drew near them with interest, for he remembered the quaint effigy of Sir Ranulph Crawford, Keeper of the Palace of Carrick, in the old kirk of Rohallion, and while Isidora knelt for a moment before the little altar, he read on a brass plate this inscription:

"Aqui yazen el noble y valiente Conde, Don Fernando de Estremera, y su hijo, Don Antonio, Condes de Maciera y Estremera; fueron muertos en una batalla con los Infieles, en tiempo del Rey Don Alfonso de Castile, Leon, y Galicia. Requiescant in pace."

"More than seven hundred years ago," thought Quentin. "Sir Ranulph's tomb is a thing of yesterday compared with this."

He surveyed with emotions of pleasure and interest this little oratory, the sanctuary of which, with its half Moorish and arabesque-like carvings was a miracle of art and a mass of gilding. It must have been erected almost immediately after the expulsion of the Arabs from that part of Castile, and so those Counts of Maciera had lived and died before the days of the Cid himself,

"The venging scourge of Moors and traitors,
The mighty thunderbolt of war!
Mirror bright of chivalry,
Buy, my Cid Campeador!"

for he had been born when Canute the Dane swayed his sceptre over England, and when Malcolm of Scotland—Rex Victoriosissimus—was nailing the hides of the Norsemen on the doors of his parish churches. It was a remote period to look back to, and yet, in some of her national features, particularly in her proneness to bloodshed, Spain was pretty much the same as when the Cid shook his lance before the walls of Zamora.

Light, many-hued, crinson, blue, and green, streamed, with flakes of dusky yellow, through the chapel's deep-arched windows, shedding a warm glow on its carved pillars, ribbed arches, and lettered stones that marked the graves of the dead below, where the Condes de Maciera, "el noble—el magno," were mingling with the dust; but now their dwelling-place was desolate, and the heir of all their titles, a half-desperate outlaw and soldier,

was serving as a guerilla in the band of Baltasar the Salamanquino.

Various stools and hassocks were still disposed near the oak rail of the sanctuary, as if to mark where several of the fugitive household had knelt but recently.

The chapel suddenly grew very dark, but was lightened as quickly by a terrific flash without. Against this glare of light the mullions and tracery of the windows were darkly but distinctly defined, and, as it passed away, a peal of thunder that seemed directly over their heads, shook the place.

Crossing herself, Donna Isidora sprang close to Quentin's side, and taking her by the hand, he led her back to a more cheerful part of the voiceless mansion.

The weather was completely broken now, and to Quentin it seemed that unless there was some change, of which there was no probability, as the year was closing, the army were likely to have a fine time of it, after breaking up from their snug cantonments in Portugal to open a campaign in Spain.

There was not the slightest appearance of the rain abating, so feeling the necessity for making themselves as comfortable as circumstances would permit, Quentin set about closing all the doors and windows, and selecting a room that had evidently been the boudoir of the Condesa, as its walls were covered by white silk starred with gold; there too, were pale-blue damask hangings, starred with silver, a piano and guitar, with piles of music, illuminated books, sketches, statuettes, and ornaments, all indicative of a graceful taste and refined mind.

These were all untouched, so there Quentin installed his companion, whose eye was the first to detect a gilt cage, at the bottom of which a former friend and favourite, a little singing bird, lay dead and covered with dust.

She seated herself near the window to watch the black clouds whirling in masses around the peaks of the great mountain ranges that lay between her and her temporary home in Portugal, and on the rain plashing frothily on the marble terrace, gorging the gurgoyles of the parapet and the basin of the bronze fountain, which had long since overflowed.

Meanwhile Quentin bustled about; to have the run of such a house was not without interest. He soon procured a brasero, which he filled with charcoal, and lighted by flashing some powder in the pan of a pistol; and for warmth, he made Isidora place her dainty little feet upon it. Canisters of biscuits and of fruit of various kinds, several flasks of Valdepenas and Champagne, a ham, and several other matters which he found in overhauling the cook's department and butler's pantry, with all the

appurtenances of the table, he appropriated with a campaigner's readiness, and insisted upon his fair companion partaking of a repast with him.

The storm—the rain, at least, as we shall have to show—continued much longer than they anticipated. But if it lasted for a fortnight, there seemed to be still provisions enough in the old villa to prevent them from being starved out even in that time.

For a period both were now perplexed and thoughtful.

Donna Isidora was considering how all this unlooked-for deviation and delay were to be explained to her brother, who, as a Spaniard, was naturally suspicious, and of whom she stood in considerable awe. The latter emotion made her conceive that the most peaceful and prudent course would be, to say nothing whatever about the casual discovery of her disguise, or her wanderings on the way before reaching Portalegre; but then, how was she to account for the absence of the horse and mule, but for the loss of which, after their flight from the French, she and Quentin would have been last night safe and separated at the place of their destination!

Then when remembering the haughty temper of Cosmo, and the cold and hostile manner in which he was treated by him, Quentin felt some alarm lest his honour might be impugned by the protracted delay in rejoining the Borderers; while his own experience, and the hints he had received from Major Middleton, made him now resolve, however great his reluctance would be in leaving that fine old soldier and Askerne, Monkton, and other 25th men, to volunteer into some other regiment—perhaps in the 94th, if his friend Captain Warriston could scheme it for him.

The moidores which Ribeaupierre had so generously shared with him, made a transfer of this kind appear the more easy in a monetary point of view; and luckily the army had not yet begun to move, so his courage was still unimpeachable.

Reflection showed that Cosmo would render his life intolerable, and make promotion an impossibility.

"I shall seek out another colonel, if he can be found in the service. I can only fail in the attempt, and be no worse than I am," said Quentin, unintentionally aloud, so that the dark eyes of the Spanish girl rested inquiringly on him.

He now seated himself in the same window opposite Isidora, who having her own thoughts, was silent. Evening was drawing near—the short evening of a dark November day, and the ceaseless rain still plashed heavily down, while the wind howled drearily around the solitary villa.

CHAPTER LV.

OUR LADY DEL PILAR.

"The foe retires—she heads the sallying host,
 Who can appease like her a lover's ghost?
 Who can so well appease a lover's fall?
 What maid retrieve when man's flushed hope is lost?
 Who hang so fiercely on the flying Gaul,
 Foiled by a woman's hand before a battered wall."—BYRON.

"WHAT a singular adventure this is," thought Quentin; "and what a perplexing position for us both! It is very romantic, certainly. A deserted house, a lovely girl, and all that. 'Tis very like some incidents I have read of, and some I have imagined; but, by Jove! I wish I could see my way handsomely out of it."

The last desire resulted from the unpleasant recollection of the Padre Trevino's face and intonation of voice, when he spoke so impressively of the *interest* he felt in the lady committed to his care, and the sternly expressed anxiety that she should reach Portalegre "without hindrance or *delay*."

Was the fellow only acting a part, or could it be that the ugly ogre actually had some tender fancy for Isidora? Whether he had or not, an unfrocked friar, especially of his peculiar character, had not much chance of success with the sister or support from the brother, so Quentin dismissed the idea.

"How charming she looks!" he thought, stealing a glance at the long lashes of the now pensive eyes, the soft features half shaded by the black lace veil, and the graceful contour of her bust and shoulders, in her low-cut scarlet velvet corset. "How delightful, if, instead of being lost in this barbarous place, she were at Rohallion or Ardgour; what a lovely friend and companion for Flora!"

Poor Quentin! Alas, this was but the sophistry of the heart, and was, perhaps, its first impulse towards the donna herself, and might end by her image supplanting Flora's there.

"Such desecration, that her hand should even be touched by such a wretch as Trevino?"

He had muttered his last thought aloud, so Donna Isidora looked up and said—

"You mentioned the Padre Trevino?"

"Did I?—surely not?" replied Quentin, as the colour rushed into his face.

"Yes—what of him, senor?" she asked, fixing her soft, dark eyes on him inquiringly.

"I must have been dreaming."

"Scarcely," said she, smiling, "while the thunder makes such a noise; you were thinking aloud."

"Perhaps."

"Of what? I insist on knowing."

"I cannot help reflecting, senora, that such actions as those in which Trevino seems to exult, must damage the Spanish cause in the eyes of Europe and of humanity, and thus—excuse me—but I begin to lose faith in your countrymen, even before we test alliance with them fully."

"And what say you of the recent siege of Zaragossa?"

"Ah, Don José Palafox is a brave man, certainly; and brave too, is Augustina, the Maid of Zaragossa, who led the canoneers in the defence of the Portillo against Lefebre."

"She had lost her lover in the siege, so apart from inspiration, her courage was no marvel."

"And you, senora—if you lost a lover?"

"I have lost several; but if I lost one whom I loved, you mean?"

"Yes—and who loved you well and truly?"

"I would face ten thousand cannon to avenge him!—Augustina did nothing that I would not dare and do!" replied Isidora, as her eyes sparkled, and she pressed her clenched hand into the soft cheek that rested on it.

"A beautiful little spitfire!" thought Quentin.

"But, senor, you must be aware that neither Palafox the Arragonese nor the girl Augustina could have achieved all they did, save for the aid of our Lady del Pilar?"

"What lady is she?" asked Quentin.

"Madre divina, listen to him! It grieves me sadly, amigo mio, to think—to think——"

"What?" asked Quentin, as she paused.

"That you are a heretic, innocently, through no fault of your own, and yet born to perdition."

"You are not very complimentary, yet I pardon you, my dear senora," replied Quentin, laughing as he kissed her hand—which we fear he did rather frequently now.

"Shall I try to teach you, and lead your heart as I would wish it?" she asked, with a gentle smile.

"If you please, senora."

"I mean, to instil a proper spirit of adoration in it?"

"If it is adoration of yourself, senora, I fear my heart is learning that fast enough already," replied Quentin, with such a caballero air that the donna laughed and coloured, but accepted the answer as a mere compliment; "then tell me," he added, "about this Lady del Pilar, who aided Don José Palafox."

"She is the guardian saint of the city of Zaragossa, and save but for her assistance, he had never withstood the arms of France so long; for it was faith in her, and her only, that inspired Palafox to make a resistance so terrible!"

"But tell me about her, Donna Isidora."

"You must learn, senor, that after the resurrection of our blessed Lord, when the twelve apostles separated and went to preach the gospel in different parts of the world, St. George set out for England, St. Anthony for Italy, and the others went elsewhere; but Santiago the elder set out for Spain, a land which, say our annals, the Saviour commended to his peculiar care.

"Before departing from Judea, he went to the humble dwelling of the blessed Virgin—the same little hut that is now at Loretto—to kiss her hand, on his knees to obtain her permission to set forth, and her blessings on his labours. After bestowing it, she adjured him to build a church unto her honour in that city of Spain where he should make the most important, or the greatest number of converts.

"So the saint set sail in a Roman galley, but was driven through the Pillars of Hercules into the Atlantic Ocean, and after enduring great perils along the shores of Lusitania, he landed in the kingdom of Galicia. Proceeding through the land, he went barefooted, preaching the gospel, teaching and baptizing, but with little success, until he came to a fair city of Arragon, on the banks of the Ebro and the Guerva, in the midst of a vast and lovely plain. Surrounded by fertile fields of corn, and by groves of orange and lime trees, its stately towers were visible from afar, glittering white as snow in the sunshine; but in its marble temples false gods and goddesses were worshipped by the people.

"Enchanted by the sight of a city so fair, the saint rested on his staff and asked of a wayfarer how it was named; and he was told that it was Cæsarea Augusta; so entering, he began to preach in the public thoroughfares, and ere long made eight disciples, who gave all they possessed to the poor, and followed him.

"Full of joy with his success he retired, one evening, to a little grove on the banks of the Ebro, with his eight new friends, and there, after long and holy converse, they fell asleep under the orange trees; but between the night and morning they were awakened by hearing a choir, possessed of a harmony that was divine, singing 'Ave Maria gratia plena, Dominus tecum;' yet they saw not from whence they proceeded.

"Louder swelled this mysterious harmony, and louder still, until they seemed to be in the midst of it.

"Listening in wonder and awe they fell on their knees, and lo,

Y

senor! a marvellous silver light, brighter than that of day, filled all the orange grove, and amid a choir of angels, whose golden hair floated over their shoulders, whose wings and robes were white as the new fallen snow, and whose faces bloomed with the purity and radiance of heaven, there, on the summit of a white marble pillar, stood the blessed Madonna, with her fair brow crowned by thirteen stars, and her robe all of a dazzling brightness. With a divine smile on her face, she listened to the choir, who went through the whole of her matin service.

"When it was ended, when the voices of the angels were hushed, their eyes cast down, and their hands meekly folded on their besoms,

"*'Santiago,'* said she, 'here on this spot raise thou the church of which I told thee, and build it round this pillar, which I have brought hither by the hands of angels; here shall it abide until the end of the world, and all the powers of hell shall not prevail against it!'

"The saint and his eight disciples, who were all on their knees in reverence and awe, bowed low at this command; when they looked up, the Virgin had disappeared with all her shining choir, and nothing remained but the miraculous pillar of polished marble, standing cold, white, and solitary, amid the moonlight, by the bank of the Ebro.

"So around that column he built the famous church of Our Lady del Pilar, which has been the scene of a thousand miracles; about it, ere long, grew the vast Christian city now named Zaragossa, which, as my father the professor always assured me, is but a corruption of the original name, *Cæsarea Augusta*.

"*Santiago* rests from his holy labours in Compostella, where he was martyred by the barbarous Galicians, and where his bones were discovered in after years by a miraculous star that burned over his grave. When danger threatens Spain, the clashing of arms and of armour is heard within his tomb, for he is her tutelary guardian, and so greatly do we venerate him, that of the canons of his cathedral seven, at least, must be cardinal priests: and there, at Compostella, he appeared in a vision to the king, Don Ramiro, before his famous battle with the Moors, and promised him victory for withholding the annual tribute of a hundred Christian girls.

"Time passed over Zaragossa, and even the infidel Moors respected the holy pillar, for it was found uninjured when the city was re-captured from them by Don Alphonso of Arragon.

"And so last year, when the French had pushed their batteries along the right bank of the Guerva, and had beaten down the rampart; and when, at their head, General Ribeaupierre had cut

a passage through the ranks of Palafox into the wide and stately Coso; when Lefebvre assailed the Portillo, and was repulsed with the loss of two thousand men, but returned with renewed fury, when a carnage ensued that must have ended in the fall of Zaragossa and the capture of Don José, *then* it was, *senor*, that the young girl Augustina, inspired by vengeance for her lover's fall, appeared among the soldiers, calling on Our Lady del Pilar to aid her chosen city.

"Then springing over dead and dying, she snatched a lighted match from her dead lover's hand and discharged a twenty-six pounder loaded with grapeshot full at the advancing foe, and animated the citizens to continue that awful struggle by which Zaragossa was saved, though the flower of Arragon perished. Foot to foot and breast to breast they fought, contesting every street and house, from floor to floor, till the French retired. Augustina received a noble pension, and now wears on her sleeve a shield of honour with the city's name."

By the time this story was ended, darkness had almost set in; the rain was still rushing down in a ceaseless flood, and the vivid lightning, with its green and ghastly glare, lit up from time to time the gloomy chambers of the silent villa.

Remembering that he had seen a lamp in one of the rooms, Quentin was about to go in search of it, when the sound of a heavy door closing with a bang that echoed through all the mansion, made him pause, and as he was Scotsman enough to have certain undefined but superstitious notions, he turned to his companion, who on hearing this unexpected noise, had started from her seat with her eyes dilated and her lips parted.

"You heard that, *senora*?" said he.

"It is the private door of the chapel—the door through which we passed," she replied.

"What has caused it to open and shut?"

"The wind, probably."

"It can be nothing else, *senora*, though in truth I was thinking of those two effigies that for seven hundred years have stood, with their stony eyes uplifted and their mailed hands clasped in prayer."

"What of them?" she asked, with surprise.

"What if they got off their pedestals and took a promenade through the villa on this stormy night?"

"Ah, *senor*, don't talk of such things!" said Donna Isidora, as she shrunk close to him and laid her hand on his arm.

CHAPTER LVI.

PLAYING WITH FIRE.

"Fraught with this fine intention, and well fenced
 In mail of proof—her purity of soul,
 She, for the future of her strength convinced,
 And that her honour was a rock or mole,
 Exceeding sagely from that hour dispensed
 With any kind of troublesome control;
 But whether Julia to the task was equal,
 Is that which must be gathered in the sequel."—BYRON.

FOR TWO entire days the rain continued to pour as it only pours in the Peninsula during the wet season, and our wet travellers were compelled to keep close to the doors of the Villa de Maciera. Could Quentin have lifted the veil that hides the future, and foreseen the turmoil and danger in which this unexpected delay would eventually involve him, he would certainly have made some vigorous efforts to procure horses or mules at Salorino, to push on for Portalegre, in spite of wind or rain; but what, then, was he to do with Donna Isidora? In such a November deluge she could neither travel on horse or foot, and "leathern conveyances" were not to be had in Spanish Estremadura in those days, nor in the present either, probably. To leave her alone in that deserted house was not to be thought of.

So Quentin stayed.

Time did not pass slowly, however. They did not read, you may be assured, though books were plentifully strewed about, as the French had been lighting their pipes with them; but Isidora took to teaching Quentin the language of the fan, as spoken or used at the bull-fight, the theatre, on the Prado, or elsewhere, and with such a pair of eyes beaming on him, over, under, or through the sticks of the aforesaid fan, he proved an apt scholar. Who would have been otherwise?

He taught her his name, at which she laughed very much, and thought it an odd one.

Ere the noon of the second day, they had made great progress in their friendship, and, circumstanced as they were, could they have failed to do so? Isolated and without resource, save in each other's dangerous society, they could scarcely be ever separate in that huge deserted house, in which they were besieged by the weather.

That the impulsive Spanish girl had conceived a strong affection for Quentin was evident from her occasional silence, her palpitation, her changing look, and the half-suppressed fire of

her dark eyes, when he approached or spoke to her; then it would seem, as he grew bewildered and timid, she became bold and unconstrained.

It would be difficult to trace the workings and describe the struggles of Donna Isidora's heart in the growing passion she felt for Quentin—the mere result of accidents which she could not control, and a propinquity which she could not avoid; or how rapidly the brief self-delusion of sisterhood and platonic affection melted away before the warm and impulsive nature of her character; how reason weakened as passion grew strong, and how she resolved to bend him to her will, for in mind and *race*, rather more than years, she was much his senior.

She knew that Spain was almost lawless now; that ties were broken, the bonds of society loosed, and that civil order, such as it was, had disappeared amid the anarchy consequent to the French invasion: hence a hundred wild schemes coursed through her busy brain. She even hoped to lure him into the guerilla ranks, or to fly with her to some remote part of the provinces, where they could never more be traced; to the mountains of Estrella, the Sierra de Oca, or the dark and wooded ranges of the Sierra Morena, where, forgotten alike by friend or foe, they could live on unknown. Such were her vague ideas for the future. For the present, it sufficed her that she loved Quentin, and that he must be taught to love her in return.

On the other hand, it is difficult to define exactly the feeling Quentin entertained for his young Spanish friend. Of her wonderful beauty he was by no means insensible. Was it platonic regard that *he* felt? We should not think so at his years, and more especially as we are disinclined to believe in such love at all. Then what the deuce was it? the reader may ask.

Flirtation, perhaps—"playing with fire," certainly.

Young though he was, Quentin could not forget Flora Warrender, and that sweet evening by the Kelpie's Pool, and the first thrill of boyish love, with all the anxious moments, the feverish hopes that stirred his heart—the tender memories of his grande passion, for such it was; and thus something of chivalry in his breast made him struggle against the present tempter and her piquante charms, for Flora's gentle image always seemed to rise up between him and her; and yet—and yet—there was something very bewildering in the hourly companionship, the complete isolation and reliance of this lovely young girl with whom he was now wandering in solitude—a companionship known to themselves alone. It was delightful but perilous work, and Quentin could not analyse, even if he cared to do so, the emotions she was exciting in his breast.

Where, when, and how was it all to end? He feared that he felt too little anxiety for reaching Portalegre and delivering the reply to Sir John Hope's despatch; and yet, if the storm abated, why tarry?

Quentin was soon assured that Isidora loved him; and he was not without that useful bump on his occiput denominated self-esteem, he felt flattered accordingly; yet, withal, he struggled manfully against the passion, with which this dangerous knowledge and Isidora's attractions, were both calculated to inspire him.

He was anxious to appear to advantage in her eyes. Why? She was nothing to him, yet, for some time, she had been the object of all his solicitude. In the course of conversation, she admitted that she had many admirers, which, for a girl so attractive, was likely enough. But why permit the development of a passion in her that could lead to nothing good? Why respond to her growing tenderness? Why—ay, there was the rub, the lure, and the peril.

His affections, such as a lad not yet twenty may possess, were promised elsewhere. Was Flora true, and remembering him still? This was rub number two.

Quentin Kennedy, I tremble for thee; and, if the truth must be told, much more for the future peace and reputation of Donna Isidora de Saldos, for neither a wholesome terror of Baltasar's wrath or the Padre Trevino's knife may avail her much.

"What if she loves me—loves me as dear Flora did?" thought Quentin; and when this pleasing but alarming idea occurred to him, he really dreaded that her heart might be too far involved in those tender passages, coquetries, and other little matters incident to their hourly intercourse: white hands taken almost inadvertently or as a matter of course; and darkly-lashed eyes that looked softly into his, were rather alluring, certainly.

In Spain, women do not shake hands with men; their dainty fingers (dingy frequently) are kissed, or not touched at all; hence we may suppose that Quentin and Isidora, when they began to sit hand-in-hand looking out on the pouring rain as twilight deepened, had got a long way on in lovemaking—in engineering parlance, that he had pushed the trenches to the base of the glacis.

Some one remarks somewhere, that the fogs and sleet of England mar many a ripening love; but that under the clear skies, in the balmy air, in the long sultry days, the voluptuous evenings, and still more in the gorgeous moonlights of Spain, the gentle passion is of more rapid growth, and becomes more impulsive, heartfelt, and keen.

In the present instance, however, chance and a storm—such as

that which waylaid Dido and the Trojan hero—had been the inspirers of Donna Isidora, who, sooth to say, found Quentin somewhat slow to follow her example.

"Mi hermano—my brother—you will be and must be," she would whisper at times, in a manner that, to say the least of it, was very bewitching.

"I shall try, Donna Isidora."

"Try, say you? Wherefore only *try*?" she asked, with her eyes full of fire and inquiry. "Is it a task so difficult to feel esteem or love for me? Go! I shall hate you!" Then she would thrust aside his hand, and pouting, half turn away her flushing face, only that the little hand might be taken again, an explanation made, and reconciliation effected.

On the evening of the second day, after one of those little poutings, and after Isidora, in anger, had been absent from him nearly two hours, she rejoined Quentin in the boudoir, which was their usual apartment, and where he welcomed her reappearance so warmly, that her face was overspread by happy and beautiful smiles.

Poor Quentin, who was at that age when a young man is apt to slide rather than fall into a regular love fit, was gradually being ensnared.

"The companionship of these few days I shall remember for ever," said he. "You shall indeed be sorrowed for, *hermana mia*."

"Think only of the present, and not of parting," said she, letting her cheek sink upon his shoulder, as they sat, hand in hand, in the window of the little boudoir, the objects of which were half hidden in the twilight.

Quentin felt his heart beat quickly, and his respiration become thick, but he said with a tender smile—

"Isidora, I am almost afraid of you."

"Afraid—and of *me*?"

"Yes."

"But why, *mi querido*?"

"You carry a stiletto," said he, laughing, "and I don't like it."

"There—behold!" she exclaimed in a breathless voice, as she drew the long steel bodkin from her hair, which fell in a dark and ripply volume over her shoulders and bosom; "I am defenceless now," she added, throwing it on the sofa; but Quentin was slow to accept the challenge.

"Oh, Isidora, to what end is all this?" he asked, struggling with himself, and almost remonstrating with her. "Why allure me to love you, as love you I shall?"

As he said this, the dark and lustrous eyes of the Castilian girl filled with half-subdued fire; her lashes drooped, and she heaved a long sigh.

"You speak of love," she said, in a low voice, while her bosom swelled beneath its scarlet corset and the thin muslin habit-shirt that was gathered round her slender throat; "all men are alike to a woman who is not in love; but in my heart I feel an emotion which tells me that if I loved there would be to me but *one* only in the world—he, my lover!"

Her calm energy, and the deep sudden glance she shot at Quentin, quite bewildered the poor fellow.

"Tell me," she resumed, while his left hand was caressed in both of hers, and her right cheek yet rested on his shoulder, while the massive curls of her hair fell over him, "is there not something delicious in the mystery and tremulousness of love; to feel that we are no longer two, but one—*ONE* in heart and soul, in thought and sympathy? Speak—you do not answer me—*estrella mia—mi vida—mi alma!*" (my star—my life—my soul) she added, in a low but piercing accent.

Trembling with deep emotion, Quentin pressed his lips to her burning brow, and there ensued a long pause, during which she lay with her forehead against his cheek.

"Listen to me, Quentin," said she, looking upward with swimming eyes; "I would speak with you seriously, earnestly, from my heart."

"Niña de mi alma—about what?"

"Religion, love."

"You choose an odd time for it—but wherefore?"

"I would teach you mine," she whispered.

"Yours—and for what purpose?"

"That—that——"

"Nay, I have courage enough to hear anything, dearest; for what purpose, *mi querida?*"

"That endearing term decides me—that we may be married, Quentin."

"I—senora!"

"You and I—what is there wonderful in that?"

Had a shell exploded between them, poor Quentin could not have been more nonplussed than by this proposition.

"Flirtation is a very fine thing," says his Peninsular comrade, Charles O'Malley, "but it's only a state of transition, after all; the tadpole existence of the lover would be very great fun, if one was never to become a frog under the hands of the parson."

Some such reflection occurred to Quentin, who stammered—

"But, Isidora, people require money to marry."

"Of course—sometimes."

"Well, I am not the heir of a shilling in the world."

"Nor am I the heiress of a pistole."

"Well, dearest Isidora——"

"Who should marry if we don't, whose circumstances are equal, and whose position in the world is so exactly similar? Ah, that we had the Padre Florez here!"

Though this was said with the sweetest of smiles Quentin failed to see the force of her reasoning; but it was impossible to refrain from kissing the rounded cheek that lay so near his own.

Then an emotion of compunction stole into his head, and rousing her from the delicious trance into which she seemed sinking, he withdrew a little (for he had never been made love to before, so surprise gave him courage), and then said—

"Isidora, this must not be—be calm and listen to me: I promised your brother—what was it that he said to me?—oh, Isidora, I must not love you; moreover, I am pledged to love a girl who is far, far away, and—but be calm, I beseech you, and think of the future!"

She now sprung from his side to snatch her stiletto from the sofa where it lay. Whether she meant to use it against herself, or him, or both, for a moment he could scarcely tell; her dark eyes were filled with a lurid gleam, and her cheek was now deadly pale; one little hand, white and tremulous, tore back her streaming and dishevelled hair; the other clutched the hilt of the weapon. She gave a keen glance at the blade, and then, as if to place the temptation to destroy beyond her reach, she snapped it to pieces and cast them from her.

Then snatching up a lamp which Quentin had lighted but a short time before, she rushed from the room, leaving him alone, bewildered and in darkness.

Quentin hurried after, and called to her repeatedly; but there was no response. He heard a door closed with violence at a distance, and then all became still—terribly still, save the now familiar sound of the rain lashing the walls and windows of the villa in the darkness without, and the howling of the wind, as it tore through the bleak October woods.

Nearly an hour elapsed after this, and knowing her wild and impulsive nature, his excitement and alarm for her safety became all but insupportable.

"Oh heavens, if she should have destroyed herself! Her death will be laid to my charge."

There seemed to be no length her fiery rashness was not capable

of leading her, and not unnaturally Congreve's well-known couplet occurred to his memory:—

"Heaven has no rage like love to hatred turn'd,
Nor hell a fury like a woman scorn'd!"

CHAPTER LVII.

THE POISONED WINE.

"Whatever can untune th' harmonious soul,
And its mild reasoning faculties control;
Give false ideas, raise desires profane,
And whirl in eddies the tumultuous brain;
Mixed with curs'd art, she direfully around,
Through all his nerves diffused the sad compound."—OVID.

WHEN Donna Isidora rushed from Quentin, she took her way unerringly (as she knew the villa well) up several flights of stairs, through passages and suites of apartments, where he could not have followed her without a guide, until she reached a little room, which had been the library and confessional of the family chaplain.

Remote from the rest of the house, its shelves full of books, its tables and desk littered with letters and papers, with little religious pictures on the walls, a Madonna crowned by a white chaplet on a bracket, a vase of withered lilies, and other little matters indicative of taste, were all untouched as when the poor Padre Florez had last been there. In rambling over the villa, if Ribeaupierre's dragoons had been in the chamber, they found nothing in it which they deemed valuable enough to destroy or carry off.

Here it was that Donna Isidora had been, when, in a fit of petulance, she had before absented herself from Quentin. She set down the lamp, and taking up a book which she had been previously perusing, and which she had found lying upon the desk where the padre had left it open, for its pages were covered with dust, she muttered—

"Let me read it again, and let me be assured; but oh, if I should destroy him or myself! What matter, then? Better both die than that *she* should have him, whoever she is—wherever she is! Oh, Padre Florez—Padre Florez, if this anecdote you have left in my way should be but a snare to death."

Then she ground her little pearly teeth as she spoke, and turned with trembling hands the dust-covered page which the chaplain's hand had indicated for some scientific purpose with certain marks in pencil, ere he had cast the volume on his desk.

doubtless when scared from the villa by the irruption of Ribeaupierre's dragoons.

It was a quarto volume on poisons, printed at Madrid, and the paragraph which interested Isidora ran as follows :—

“Note of a medicated wine, which produceth various emotions and quaint fancies, but chiefly love and madness for a time in those who partake thereof.

“Celius, an ancient Latin writer, telleth us of a company of young men, who were drinking in a taberna of the luxurious city of Agrigentum in Sicily, in those days when the tyrant Phalaris usurped the sovereignty thereof, and who, on a sudden, were seized by a malady of the brain. Being in sight of the sea, they believed themselves to be on board of a ship which was about to be cast away in a storm, and while clamouring and shouting wildly, to save themselves, they flung out of the windows the whole of the furniture; and in this belief they continued for some hours, even after being brought before a magistrate, whom they mistook for a pilot, and besought in moving terms to steer the galley aright, lest she should founder.

“On others, this wine acted as a philtre, and on seeing women, they fell madly in love with them, threatening their own destruction if their love was not responded to.

“I was persuaded in my own mind, says Celius, that this singular malady could only arise from some adulteration of the wine, and therefore had the landlord summoned before a magistrate, who compelled him to confess that he was in the habit of adulterating wines with a mixture of henbane and mandrakes (the root of which is said to bear a resemblance to the human form), and which must thus doubtless be considered the cause of this singular disease.”

“Mandrake and henbane—a little of this mixture, and Quentin might love me! There is no sea here, and he could never fancy the villa to be a ship,” thought Isidora, weeping tears of bitterness and wounded pride. “If I can only bring this delirium on him, the real truth of his heart may come out, and I shall learn whether he loves me or loves me *not*, and who this other is that he prefers to me. But if in his madness—pho! I can defend myself. Oh, Padre Florez, was it a good or bad angel that tempted you to leave this open book in my way, and lured me to read it?”

A strange and deep dark smile came over the lovely face of this wild and wilful girl as she took up the lamp and approached the cabinet of the worthy Padre Florez, whose room seemed quite as much a laboratory as a library, for goodly rows of phials and bottles contested for place with the Bollandists, *Acta Sanctorum*, the Acts of the Council of Trent, the *Annals of Ferrereas*,

&c., for doubtless he had been the doctor—a curer of bodies as well as of souls—in his comarca, or district of Estremadura.

Hastily and impatiently she passed her lamp along the rows of little drawers containing herbs and simples, and the shelves of phials, the labels of which were quite enigmas to her; but on the third occasion a cry of joy escaped her.

“Las Mandragoras—el Beleño!” she exclaimed, as she snatched two small bottles, each full of a clear liquid, which bore those names. But now a terrible yet natural doubt seized her.

“How much of these may I pour in this wine without destroying us *both*?—what matter how much—what matter how much, so far as I am concerned? My life is neither a valuable nor a happy one; but he—have I a right to destroy him, perhaps body and soul—ah, Madre divina, body and soul, too! No matter—I must learn the truth, and whether he loves or only fears me.”

In fact, the sudden passion which she had conceived for Quentin seemed to have disordered her brain. She heard him calling her at that moment, and as there was no time to lose in further consideration, she filled a small phial from both bottles, thrust it in her bosom, and left the room, previously, by what impulse we know not, concealing the book of the padre, who could little have foreseen the dangerous use to which its open pages would be put. With a heart that palpitated painfully between hope and fear, love and anger, Isidora quitted the room of the padre to return to Quentin. He, in the meantime, had become greatly alarmed by her protracted absence, and procuring a light by flashing powder in the pan of one of his pistols, he was proceeding in search of her through the chambers of the villa, from the walls of which many a grim old fellow in beard and breast-plate looked grimly and sternly at him out of his frame:—many a grave hidalgo by Diego Velasquez were there, and many a scriptural Murillo, sold, perhaps, by that great painter for bread in the streets of his native Seville.

Of all the chateaux en Espagne, this Villa de Maciera was, perhaps, the last of which Quentin could have imagined himself to be even temporarily master. Gloomy and deserted, it seemed to be veritably one of the mysterious mansions of which he had read so much in the romances of Mrs. Anne Radcliffe, who was then in the zenith of her fame.

“It is, indeed, a devil of a predicament,” he muttered.

Again and again he called her name aloud, without hearing other response than the echoes. The place was mournfully still, and now the wind and rain had ceased, and the night had be-

come calm. Well, there was some comfort in that; with morning he might resume his journey; but this Spanish girl—his heart trembled for her, for there seemed to be no extravagant impulse to which she was not capable of giving way.

To have responded to her wayward love, and then to have “levanted” on the first opportunity, “a way we (sometimes) have in the army,” might have been the treacherous measure adopted by many: but Quentin, apart from his admiration of her beauty, had a sincere regard for the girl, and though young in years, felt older by experience than those years warranted. He thought she might have retired to her room—to rest, perhaps; yet he could not hear her breathing: for when he listened at the door, all was still within. He knocked gently, but there was no response, so pushing it open, he entered. Isidora had told him that this was the apartment she usually occupied when residing with the Condesa de Maciera.

It was the perfection of a little bed-chamber; elaborate candelabra of cut crystal glittered like prisms on the marble mantelpiece, the central ornament of which was an exquisite crucifix of ivory. The floor was of polished oak, and the walls were hung with water-colour landscapes of the adjacent mountain scenery, in chaste and narrow frames; and the little bed, half buried amid muslin curtains of the purest white, was much more like an English than a Spanish one. Tent-form, the flowing drapery depended from a gilt coronet; the pillows, edged with the finest lace, were all untouched and unpressed, so Donna Isidora was not there.

Quentin started as he saw her figure suddenly reflected in a large cheval-glass. She was standing behind him, near the door of the apartment, regarding him with an expression of mournful interest in her eyes; her face pale as death, her hair flowing and dishevelled over her shoulders, her hands pressed upon her bosom, and seeming wondrously white when contrasted with the deep scarlet velvet of her corset; her flounces of black and scarlet, and the taper legs ending in the pretty Cordovan shoes, making altogether a very charming portrait.

“Senor,” she said, in a low voice, “what were you seeking here?”

“I sought you, Isidora: I became seriously alarmed——”

“You do, then, care for me, senor—a little?”

“Care for you, dearest Isidora——”

“Yet you drove me away from you!” she said, in a voice full of tender reproach.

“Do not say so,” replied Quentin, taking her hot and trembling hands in his, and feeling very bewildered indeed.

"Your studied coldness repelled me. Ah, Dios mio! now calm, how collected you are, and I—! get me some water, friend—or some wine, rather; and this other—this other—she——"

"Who, senora?"

"Some wine, my friend. I am cold and flushed by turns. Some wine, I implore you!"

"Permit me to lead you from this," said Quentin, conducting her back to the boudoir, where he seated her on the sofa by his side, and endeavoured to soothe her: but the memory of the late scene, and the fire of jealousy that glowed in her heart, filled it with mingled anger and love.

While Quentin, all unconscious of what was about to ensue, was untwisting the wire of a champagne flask, she emptied the entire contents of her secret phial into a crystal goblet, and when the sparkling wine, with its pink tint and myriad globules, frothed and effervesced, as Quentin poured it in, the poison—for such it was—became at once concealed.

"Drink with me," said she, kissing the cup and presenting it to him; then, feverish and excited as he was, he took a deep draught; after which, with another of her strange smiles, the donna drank the rest, and, as she did so, the pallor of her little face, and the unnatural light in her eyes, attracted the attention of Quentin. He took her hands in his, and began to speak, saying he knew not what, for he seemed to have lost all control over his tongue; then the room appeared to swim round him, while objects became wavering and indistinct.

"What—what is this that is coming over me?" he exclaimed.

"Death, perhaps," said Isidora, laying her head on his shoulder, and pressing his hand to her lips; "but, mi vida—mi querido—you will not go from me to her?"

"To whom?"

"She—that other whom you love?"

"Flora—Flora Warrender!" exclaimed Quentin, wildly, as the potent wine and its dangerous adjuncts began to affect his brain.

Whether the padre's beleno was the exact compound referred to by his ancient authority, we are not prepared to say, but the effect of the cup imbibed by Quentin was sufficiently disastrous. The objects in the room began to multiply with wonderful rapidity; the white silk drapery of the walls seemed to be covered with falling stars; the pale blue damask curtains of the windows assumed strange shapes, and appeared to wave to and fro. The bronze statuettes on the mantelpiece appeared to be performing fandangos and other fantastic dances, and, as the delirium crept over him, Quentin grasped at the back of a sofa to save himself from falling, while Isidora still clasped him in

her arms; and now he believed her to be Flora Warrender, and as such addressed, and even caressed her.

Another draught of pure champagne, which he took greedily to quench the burning thirst that now seized him, completed the temporary overthrow of his reason. Isidora seemed to pass away, and Flora Warrender took her place. He wept as he kissed her hands, and spoke with sorrow of their long, long separation; of the dangers and privations he had undergone, and of Cosmo's tyranny; of the joy with which he beheld her again, and now, that they never more would part; and thus, with every endearing word, he unconsciously stabbed his rash and impetuous Spaniard, who, although he spoke in English, and she was half delirious with the wine, knew too well that when Quentin kissed her thick, dark wavy hair that curled over her broad low forehead, and pressed her hand to his heart, he was thinking of *another*, for whom these endearments were intended. At last, stupefaction came over him, and sinking on a fauteuil, he remembered no more.

CHAPTER LVIII.

PADRE FLOREZ.

"Not yet—I never knew till now
 How precious life could be;
 My heart is full of love—O Death,
 I cannot come with thee!
 Not yet—the flowers are in my path,
 The sun is in the sky;
 Not yet, my heart is full of hope—
 I cannot bear to die."—L. E. L.

ON recovering from the insensibility that had come upon him, Quentin had no idea of what period of time had elapsed since the occurrence of the episode we have just described. In fact, he had considerable difficulty in remembering where he was, so maddened was he by a burning heat, by pricking pains through all his system, an intolerable thirst, an aching head, and a throat and tongue that were rough and dry. His temples throbbed fearfully, his pulse was quick; there was a clamorous anxiety in his mind he knew not why or wherefore; he had a recurrent hiccough; and, though he knew it not, these were all the symptoms of being dangerously poisoned.

The morning was bright and sunny. Refreshed by the past rains, the rows of orange-trees around the stately terrace, the lawn of the villa, and the clumps of arbutus and beech about it,

looked fresh and green. Producing a grateful sensation, the cool morning breeze fanned his throbbing temples, and on rousing himself, Quentin found that he was lying on the marble terrace near the bronze fountain, of the cool and sparkling water of which he drank deeply, as he had frequently done before, while almost unconscious, by mere instinct, for now he had no memory of it. Weak, faint, and giddy, and feeling seriously ill, he staggered up and laved his hands and brow in the marble basin; then he endeavoured to reflect or consider how his present predicament came about. Donna Isidora, where was she? and where was Flora Warrender? for he had misty memories of the endearments of *both*. It seemed that overnight he had a strange dream that the former—or could it be the latter?—had been carried off by French soldiers, and that he had neither the power to succour nor to save her. This, however, was no dream, but a reality, for a patrol of French cavalry, seeing lights in the villa, which they believed to be deserted, had ridden upon the terrace and proceeded to search the place. A few dismounted, and, armed with their swords and pistols, entered the house. Amid her terror on witnessing the unexpected stupefaction that had come over Quentin, the donna heard the clank of hoofs on the terrace, and then the jingle of spurs and steel scabbards on the tessellated floor of the vestibule.

Alarm lest her brother had come in search of her, and had tracked them hither, was her first emotion. Covering the insensible form of Quentin with the blue damask drapery of a window, near which he had sunk to sleep upon a fauteuil, she stooped and kissed his flushed forehead; then taking a lamp, she endeavoured to make her way to the room of the Padre Florez, which she considered alike remote and secure; but her light was seen flashing from story to story up the great marble staircase.

"En avant, mes braves!" cried an officer, laughing; "'tis only a petticoat—follow and capture."

The dismounted Chasseurs uttered a shout, and giving chase, soon secured the unfortunate Isidora. Shrieking, she was borne into the open air; her resistance, which was desperate, only serving to provoke much coarse laughter and joking. A few minutes after this, she found herself trussed like a bundle of hay to the crupper of a troop-horse, and en route for Valencia de Alcantara, the captive of a smart young officer of Chasseurs à cheval, who further secured her close to his own person by a waist-belt. By alternate caresses and jests he endeavoured to soothe her grief, and her passion; but seeing that the girl was beautiful, he was determined not to release her, for he was no other than our former jovial acquaintance, Eugene de Ribeau-

pierre, the sous-lieutenant of the 24th Chasseurs. Partially roused by the noise and by her cries, Quentin had staggered to the terrace like one in a dream, and had fallen beside the fountain, so that his misty memories of having seen her carried off by French chasseurs was no vision, but reality. Yet, somehow, he thought she might be in the villa after all, and he called her by name repeatedly. And then there were memories of Flora Warrender that floated strangely through his brain. It seemed that he had but recently seen her, spoken with her, had embraced and clasped her to his breast—that Flora, whom he thought was far, far away—the Flora for whom he sorrowed and longed through the dreary hours of many a march by night and day, whom he had dreamed of and prayed for.

What mystery—what madness was this?

The musical jangling of mule-bells was now heard, and ere long other actors came upon the scene, as some jovial muleteers, cracking their whips and their jokes, ascended the steps of the terrace, accompanied by a tall, thin, and reverend-looking padre, wearing a huge shovel hat and a long black serge soutan, the buttons of which, a close row, extended from his chin to his ankles.

The old Condesa de Maciera, who, after being again and again terrified and harassed by the outrages of the plundering French patrols and foraging parties, had at last fled with all her household to the small Portuguese town of Marvao, had now sent her chaplain back to see what was the state of matters at her villa, and he arrived thus most opportunely for Quentin Kennedy, whose uniform at once secured him the interest both of the padre and the muleteers. The latter proved luckily to be Ramon Campillo, of Miranda del Ebro, his confrère Ignacio Noain, and others, whom Quentin had met before, and who at once recognised him and overwhelmed him with questions, to which he found the utter impossibility of giving satisfactory replies. His present state was as puzzling to himself as to the padre, who had him conveyed within doors, and, strangely enough, into the boudoir, the features of which brought back to Quentin's memory some of the exciting and bewildering passages of last night. The unextinguished lamp yet smoked on the table, broken crystal cups and champagne flasks, chairs overturned, and a phial of very suspicious aspect, all attracted the attention of Padre Florez. As he examined the latter, and applied his nose and lips to the mouth, while endeavouring to discover what the contents had been, he changed colour, and became visibly excited.

"Look to the stranger—what a mere boy he is!—but look to him, Ramon, mi hijo," said he, "while I go to my room—my laboratory—and see what I can do for him."

The padre, who had a deep and friendly interest in the household of his patrona the countess-dowager, and of the young Conde now serving with the guerilla band of Baltasar de Saldos, looked anxiously through the suites of rooms as he proceeded, sighing over the slashed Murillos and smashed mirrors, and the too evident sabre-cuts in the richly-carved cabinets of oak and ebony, in the gilded consoles, the beautiful tables of marqueterie, and he groaned at last over the ruins of some alabaster statuettes and great jars of Sèvres and majolica, which, in the last night's search, the French had wantonly dashed to pieces.

Ere long, he reached his own room, and on looking about, he missed at once his quarto volume on poisons, the work he had been studying—particularly that fatal passage from Celius—when the French dragoons drove the whole household from the villa. It was gone; but in its place on the desk he found the two bottles left by Isidora, the decoctions of mandrake and henbane. Here was a clue to the illness of the Ingles below; but how had the matter come to pass? Had he poisoned himself? This the padre doubted; but as an instant remedy was necessary, an inquiry and explanation would follow the cure.

Selecting certain simples, the Padre Florez hurried back to his patient, who was stretched on the sofa of the boudoir in a very bewildered condition, endeavouring to understand and reply to the somewhat earnest inquiries of Ramon and his brother muleteers, who were now en route from Marvao to Portalegre; but he replied only by a languid and haggard smile. He told them, however, that the sister of Don Baltasar de Saldos was in the villa, and implored them to search for her, which they did, in considerable excitement and surprise, leaving, as Ramon said, not even a rat-hole unexamined, but no trace of her could be found. Then Quentin rather surprised them by saying, impetuously, that she had been carried off by the French.

"Is it a dream, is she dead, or has she fled?" he asked of himself again and again; "no, no; she would never leave me willingly, her insane love forbids the idea."

Ramon, in searching for the sister of the formidable guerilla chief, whose name was already finding an echo in every Castilian heart, found Quentin's cap, sabre, and pistols, and fortunately the despatch or reply of Don Baltasar to Sir John Hope. Ignacio Noain found a lady's shoe of Cordovan leather, which the padre identified as having belonged to Donna Isidora. This served to corroborate the strange story of Quentin; but Florez remembered that the donna was in the habit of visiting the countess at the villa, and this little slipper might have been left behind by her on some occasion. It was found, however, in the

vestibule, where it had fallen from her foot as the dragoons somewhat roughly dragged her away.

"In what way came this young stranger to speak of De Saldos' sister at all? Had they eloped together? If so," thought the padre, "then Heaven help the Englishman, for his doom is sealed!"

"I am ill—ill, padre—ill in body and sick at heart!" said Quentin faintly, as Florez, watch in hand, felt his pulse.

"You appear to have been poisoned, my poor boy," said he.

"Poisoned?" repeated Quentin, as a terrible fear and suspicion of Isidora's revengeful pride rushed upon him.

"Yes—beyond a doubt."

"Shall I die, padre?" he asked in an agitated voice.

"Oh no, my son, there is no fear of that—I shall cure you by a few simple remedies."

Quentin felt greatly relieved in mind on hearing this; but at present thirst was his chief ailment, with an internal heat and pain that gave him no rest.

"Of what were you partaking last night?"

"Of wine only—champagne, which I found in a cabinet of the comedero" (dining-room).

"There is but one crystal cup remaining here unbroken."

"From that I drank it," said Quentin, who, in his delirium, had smashed a supper equipage of his own collecting.

It was a large goblet of Venetian crystal, studded with brilliantly-coloured stones. The Padre Florez looked at the dregs and shook his white head.

"This wine has been drugged—there is a fresh mystery here! And Donna Isidora de Saldos was with you last night—you are assured of that?"

"As sure as that I live and breathe, Senor Padre."

"Alone?" continued the priest, with knitted brows.

"Alone."

"How came it to pass that her brother entrusted her with you?" asked the padre, suspiciously.

Quentin was too ill to explain that she had been sent with him in disguise as the mother of the guerilla Trevino; and Padre Florez, who naturally conceived the idea that they had eloped as lovers, and had quarrelled, to prevent a great tragedy, set about curing him.

He compelled him to drink quantities of new milk and salad oil, both of which he procured from the muleteers who were bivouacking on the terrace; after this, he gave him warm water mixed with the same oil, and fresh butter, to provoke intense sickness, to destroy the acrimony of the poison, and to prevent it doing injury to the bowels.

"If the pain continues, Ramon, we shall have to kill a sheep," said the padre, "and apply its intestines, reeking hot, to the stomach of the patient; 'tis a remedy I have never known to fail in allaying spasms there, especially if the sheep be a *moreno*."

By nightfall, however, thanks to the good padre's real skill, which was superior to his superstition in the efficacy of black-faced mutton, Quentin was quite relieved, and after a time related his whole story from the time of his leaving Herrerueta. Florez listened to him with considerable interest, approved of all he had done, and gave him much good advice; but added that he feared De Saldos would hold him accountable for the loss of his sister, for whose treatment, and of whose ultimate fate among the French, he had the greatest apprehension. He added that his visit to the villa seemed to have been a special interposition of heaven in Quentin's favour, as he would inevitably have died in mortal agonies but for the prompt and simple applications which saved him.

He desired Ramon to take special charge of the patient to Portalegre; to see that by the way he got nothing stronger for food than milk, gruel, or barley broth, and no wine whatever; and then giving them all his benediction, he stuck his shovel hat on his worthy old cranium, mounted his sleek mule, and pricking its dapple flanks with his box stirrup-irons, departed for Marvao, by the way of Valencia de Alcantara, where he hoped to trace, and perhaps release the unfortunate girl from her captors.

Impatient though the muleteers were to proceed with their train of mules, which were laden chiefly with wine for Sir John Hope's division, they agreed to remain for a night at the villa, where their cattle grazed on the lawn. With dawn next day they set forth, with Quentin riding at the head of the train, mounted on Madrina, and feeling very much like one in a dream.

"Come, Ignacio Noain, a stirrup-cup ere we go," said Ramon, as he came forth, cracking his enormous whip, a blunderbuss slung on his back, and his sombrero rakishly cocked over his left eye.

Ignacio handed a cupful of wine to his leader.

"Demonio!" said the latter, "this smacks of the *borrachio* skin."

"To me it was luscious as a melon of Abrantes in June, after the coarse *aguardiente* we drank last night," said Ignacio.

"Of course you haven't tried the casks of Valdepenas on the three leading mules?" said Ramon, with a cunning leer.

"They are for the English general and his staff, so every cask is guarded by an outer one."

"And thus your gimlet failed to reach the wine?"

"Precisely so."

"Maldita! the merchant who sold that wine must either be a rogue at heart, or an old muleteer, to be so well up to all the tricks of the road. And now, *senor*, here is milk for you; no wine; we must remember the orders of *Padre Florez*," said Ramon, presenting Quentin with a bowl of new goat's-milk, as he sat, pale as a spectre, on the demipique saddle with which *Madrina* was accoutred, and which, in addition to all her other fringe and worsted trappings, gave that stately pet-mare very much the aspect of a mummer's nag.

Quentin, though refreshed and revived by the cool morning air, and cheered by the hope of being soon at head-quarters with his present jovial guides, felt sad and bewildered when he thought of *Isidora*, her beauty, her impetuous spirit, the wild and sudden love she had professed for himself, and the too probable horror of her fate in the hands of the French, who were so unscrupulous towards the Spaniards and Portuguese. Then the mystery of the poison; it was no doubt, he hoped, some fatal mistake, but one which might never be solved or explained. In fancy he seemed still to see her wondrous dark eyes, with their thick black lashes, while her soft musical voice seemed to mingle with the melodious bells of the long train of mules at the head of which *Madrina* paced as guide; and as they descended the vine-clad hills towards the frontiers of Portugal, he turned in his saddle to give a farewell glance at the deserted *Villa de Maciera*.

CHAPTER LIX.

THE ARMY MARCHES.

"No martial shout is there—in silence dread,
Save the dull cadence of the soldier's tread,
Or where the measured beat of distant drum
Tells forth their slow advance—they come! they come!
On! England, on! and thou, O Scotland, raise,
'Midst *Lusias*' wilds, thy shout of other days,
Till grim *Alcoba* catch thy slogan roar,
And trembling, glisten to thy blue claymore."

LORD GREENVILLE.—1813.

On the 2nd day of November, 1808, the division of Sir John Hope broke up from its cantonments at Portalegre, and by successive regiments began its march towards Spain. The whole British army in Portugal was now pouring forward, and it was calculated that when Sir John Moore effected a junction with the Spanish

armies, the united forces would amount to one hundred and thirteen thousand men, to oppose the vast power of France, which was divided into eight corps, led by the first soldiers of the Empire, the Marshal-Dukes of Belluno, Istria, Cornegliano, Treviso, Elchingen, Abrantes, Generals St. Cyr and Lefebvre.

To prevent this junction was the first measure of the French, twenty-five thousand of whom attacked the main body of Blake's army on the 31st of October, and, after an obstinate conflict of eight hours, forced him back upon Valmeseda. He was without artillery, otherwise this famous Irish soldier of fortune might have held the ground against them, even though outnumbered as he was by eight thousand bayonets.

Meanwhile, Napoleon advanced to Burgos, where he established his head-quarters, and from whence he issued an edict in the name of his brother Joseph, as King of Spain, granting a pardon to all Spaniards, soldiers, guerillas, and others, who, within one month after his arrival at Madrid, would lay down their arms and renounce all connexion with Great Britain. Soon after Madrid fell into his hands, either by a memory of the terrors of Zaragossa or the treachery of Morla, though sixty thousand Spaniards were ready to defend its streets and gates!

Sir John Moore was a young Scotch officer of great experience. He had served at the capture of Corsica, and led the stormers of the Mozzello Fort amid a shower of shot, shell, and hand-grenades. He was present at the capture of many of the West India islands; he had served in the Irish Rebellion, the disastrous expedition to Holland, and the glorious one to Egypt, which wrested that country from the French; and he had been commander-in-chief in the Mediterranean and Sweden. Though superseded temporarily by the vacillating ministry who sent Sir Harry Burrard to Portugal, he was still modestly content to act as third in command, nobly saying, that "he would never refuse to serve his country while he was able, and that if the King commanded him to act as ensign, he would obey him."

It was this chivalrous spirit which, on arriving in Portugal after the battle of Vimiera, made him declare to Sir Hew Dalrymple, that as Sir Arthur Wellesley had done so much in winning that victory and the battle of Roleia, it was but fair that he should still continue to take the lead in the task of freeing Portugal from the French; and Moore offered generously, "if the good of the service required it, to execute any part of the campaign allotted to him, without interfering with Sir Arthur."

After he obtained the command, the utmost activity prevailed at head-quarters to forward the expedition for the relief of the Spanish Peninsula, though he was left by Government almost

without money. "He was very desirous," says Napier, "that troops who had a journey of six hundred miles to make, should not, at the commencement, be overwhelmed by torrents of rain, which in Portugal descend at this period with such violence as to destroy the shoes, ammunition, and accoutrements of the soldier, and render him almost unfit for service."

In eight days he had his troops ready, and most of them in motion; but difficulties soon occurred. The lazy Portuguese asserted that it was impracticable to carry siege, or even field artillery, by the mule and horse paths which traversed their vast mountain sierras; but Sir John Moore discovered on his march that the roads, though very bad, were open enough for the purpose; but the knowledge came rather too late. The artillery, consisting of twenty-four pieces, with a thousand cavalry, he sent with the division of Sir John Hope, whose orders were to march by Elvas on the Madrid road. Moore retained one brigade of six-pounders at head-quarters. Two brigades of infantry, under General Paget, were to march by Elvas and Alcantara. Two others, under Marshal Beresford, by the way of Coimbra, and three more, under General Fraser, were to move by the city of Abrantes, near the right bank of the Tagus. The *whole* to unite at Salamanca, where Sir John Hope and Sir David Baird, with their divisions, were to join, if they failed to do so at Valladolid. Such was the scheme of Sir John Moore for commencing operations against the Emperor of France at the head of his mighty legions.

Before the troops marched, he warned them in general orders, that the Spaniards were a nation by habit and nature grave, austere, orderly, and sober, but prone to ire and easily insulted; he therefore sought to impress upon his soldiers the propriety of accommodating themselves to the manners of those they were going among, and neither by intemperance of conduct or language, to shock a people who were grateful to Britain for an alliance which was to free them from the bondage of France, and to restore them to their ancient liberty and independence.

"Upon entering Spain," concludes this most judicious order, "as a compliment to the nation, the army will wear the *Red cockade*, in addition to their own. For this purpose, cockades are ordered for the non-commissioned officers and men; they will be sent from Madrid; but in the meantime officers are requested to provide them and put them on, as soon as they pass the frontier."

Such expedition did the gallant Moore make, that he out-marched his magazines; and to use his own words, "the army ran the risk of finding itself in front of the enemy, with no more ammunition than the men carried in their pouches."

And now, to resume our humble story, it was on the 2nd of November, the very day on which the second division was to march, that the Muleteer Ramon of Miranda and his train entered Portalegre about daybreak, with Quentin Kennedy riding on Madrina, looking pale, weary, and exhausted.

"Por Dios! we have just come in time, senor," said Ramon; "another hour, and even the rear guard would have been difficult to overtake. Here I shall leave you and my casks of Valdepenas, and then, ho for Lisbon!"

The sun had not yet risen, and the dull haze that rolled from the valleys along the sombre slopes of the rocky sierras, yet hovered over the quaint little episcopal city of Portalegre. The church bells and those of the Santa Engracia convent (at which Quentin was to have left poor Isidora) were ringing out a farewell peal to the departing British, and prayers for the success of their arms were mingled with the morning matins at every altar in the bishopric. The narrow streets were blocked up with sombre crowds of people, and by troops in heavy marching order. All betokened hasty preparations for advancing to the front, and amid the loud vivas of the Portuguese could be heard the wailing of the poor soldiers' wives who were to be left behind, for on the 10th October, Sir John Moore, who, though brave as a lion, was tender as a woman, and whose love and devotion for his mother was a leading characteristic throughout his short but brilliant life, issued the following order:—

"As in the course of the long march which the army is about to undertake, and where *no carts* will be allowed, the women would unavoidably be exposed to the greatest hardship and distress, commanding officers are, therefore, desired to use their endeavours to prevent as many as possible, *particularly those having young children*, or such as are not stout or equal to fatigue, from following the army. An officer will be charged to draw their rations, and they will be sent back to England by the first good opportunity; and, when landed, they will receive the same allowance which they would have been entitled to if they had not embarked, to enable them to reach their homes."

Unfortunately, implicit obedience was not paid to his humane order, and thus many women, with their children, followed the troops in secret, and thus many, if not all, perished by the way, during the horrors of the retreat to Corunna. Among these, who courageously followed the army on foot and in secrecy, or sometimes mounted on a poor lean burro, was the wife of Allan Grange, the poor sergeant, reduced at Colchester barracks, a fragile and ailing creature, who bore a pale, sickly, and consumptive little baby at her breast.

The advanced guard of Light Dragoons, with oats and forage trussed in nets and bags upon the cruppers, had already been detailed, and were in their saddles, half a mile in front of the city, at the base of the hill on which it stands. The twenty-four pieces of artillery were all in readiness, the trails limbered up and the horses traced, with water-buckets, spare wheels and forge-waggon, the gunners in their seats and saddles. The massed columns of infantry were in heavy marching order, with great-coats rolled, canteens and haversacks slung crosswise, with colours, in some instances cased, and locks hammerstalled; the cavalry were in the great plaza, in close column of troops, every man riding with a net of forage behind him; the baggage-animals, already laden with tents, bags, beds, boxes, and camp-kettles, amid the cracking of whips, and oaths uttered in English, Irish, Spanish, and Portuguese, were driven forth to make way for the troops, who, while staff and other officers galloped about as if possessed by so many devils, began their march for Spain.

Bewildered by the confusion of the scene amid which he so suddenly found himself, and thrust by the pressure of the crowd against the wall of the Santa Engracia convent, Quentin sat in the saddle of Madrina, and saw nearly the whole division of Sir John Hope defile before him, a long and glittering array, for as the golden light of the sun poured along the picturesque vista of the ancient street, and the white rolling mists were dispelled or exhaled upward, the burnished barrels, bayonets, and sword-blades, the polished brasses of the accoutrements, and the glazed tops of the shakos, all flashed and shone, while the thoroughfares resounded to the tramp of horse and foot, spurs, scabbards, and chain bridles—to the sharp blare of the cavalry trumpets, and the hoarse war pipes of the plaided Highlanders—the wild, strange music that Scotsmen only *feel* or understand. Many of the soldiers were pale and wan, from the comfortless wards of Belem hospital, and many a bandaged head and plaster on a cheek showed the part they had borne at Roleia and Vimiera, and in the struggle which had just freed Portugal from those who aimed at the conquest of Europe. Uniforms already old and thriftily patched with cloth of divers colours, chabraques worn bare, gun carriages minus paint and oil, as they rumbled along; all spoke of service and hard work—of harder work and keener service yet to come!

And now advanced a corps, on hearing the well-known air played by whose drums and fifes, Quentin made a leap from the saddle of Madrina, and forced a passage through the dense crowd, for it was the 25th, "The King's Own Borderers," with the

Castle of Edinburgh shining on their colours, and all their old honours—"Nisi Dominus Frustra," Egypt, and Egmont-op-Zee, that debouched into the main street of Portalegre in a dense close column of sections, nine hundred men, all marching as *one* to their old quick step of a thousand memories—

"All the blue bonnets are bound for the border,"

or General Leslie's march to Long-Marston Moor in the days of the great civil war.

Endued with fresh strength by the sight of the regiment, Quentin burst through the crowd, and, reaching the grenadiers, grasped the hand of Rowland Askerne, on whose breast he saw a Portuguese order glittering.

"Quentin Kennedy, by all that's wonderful!" exclaimed the tall captain, grasping his hand warmly in return. "Quentin, my boy, how goes it?"

"Hallo! talk of the——" began Monkton, clapping him on the back; "we were just talking about you—thought you lost, gone, and all that sort of thing, a martyr to duty; but welcome back, my dear lad!"

"Where is old Major Middleton?"

"With Buckle in rear of the column."

"And little Boyle?"

"Oh, Pimple is with Colyear carrying the colours; but *where* have you been, and *what* the deuce have you been about, eh?"

"You look pale and weary to begin a march this morning, sir," said some of the soldiers, kindly, for Quentin was a favourite with them all.

"You must have a horse," said Askerne: "you look absolutely ill, Quentin; how is this?"

"It is a long story, Askerne," replied Kennedy, with a haggard smile.

"Egad, I thought, and we *all* thought, the duty one beyond your years and experience."

"Make way here in front, please; mark time, the grenadiers," said an authoritative voice as the column issued from the city gate, and an officer who nearly rode our hero down, pushed his horse between the band and the first section of the grenadier company. Quentin looked indignantly up, and found the cold, stern, and uncompromising eye of Cosmo, the Master of Robal-lion, steadily bent upon him.

"You have returned, sir, *at last*?" was his stiff response to Quentin's hasty salute.

"It is little short of a miracle that I ever returned at all, Colonel Crawford; I have undergone no small danger I beg to assure you, and have but this instant entered Portalegre. I have

acquitted myself of the duty with which the general did me the honour to entrust me. The junction will be formed with our division on the march, and I have a despatch from the Guerilla Chief."

"For whom?"

"Sir John Hope, sir; shall I give it to him in person?"

"No—I shall myself deliver it," replied Cosmo, who feared naturally the favourable impression which Quentin might make on the good general, to whom he had been represented as unworthy; "get your musket and fall in with your company as soon as possible. We shall have some *other* work cut out for you ere long," added Cosmo, with a dark and scornful smile, as he took, or rather snatched the despatch from Quentin, who seemed more fit for a sick bed than for marching among the sturdy grenadiers of the Borderers; but for that day he was attached to the baggage guard, which was under Lieutenant Colville, and this arrangement for his comfort was made by the kindness of the old halberdier Norman Calder, who was now sergeant-major. He rode the spare horse of Major Middleton, a boon but for which he could never have kept up with the troops.

With the baggage marched the rear guard of the division, having with it the sick, the drunk, disorderly, and prisoners, together with a medley of followers of a not very reputable kind, who noisily scorned alike control or discipline.

As Quentin was riding thus, he was passed from the rear by the general and his staff. The former gave him a keen and inquiring glance, answered his salute briefly, and passed on. Whether Cosmo had mentioned him favourably, or the reverse, in delivering the despatch of Don Baltasar, he knew not; but he knew that when once the spiteful element attains ascendancy in the human heart, there is no mode in which it will not seek to be gratified and no measure to its malignity, and he sighed over an enmity that he dared neither to grapple with nor hope to overcome; and all this he owed to the preference of Flora Warrender for him—her early friend and playmate in youth. Well, there was some consolation in the cause! Though his reception by the Master of Rohallion neither disappointed nor shocked him, it chilled the poor lad's heart, which grew heavy as he saw how unavailing and how fruitless were all his efforts to deserve praise or to win honour!

CHAPTER LX.

HALT AT AZUMAR.

"Pleasures fled hence, wide now's the gulf between us;
 Stern Mars has routed Bacchus and sweet Venus:
 I can no more—the lamp's fast fading ray
 Reminds me of parade ere break of day,
 Where, shivering, I must strut, though bleak the morning,
 Roused by the hateful drummer's early warning.
 Come, then, my boat-cloak, let me wrap thee round,
 And snore in concert stretched upon the ground."—*An Elegy.*

THE noisy racket maintained by those who were in custody of the rear-guard, the voices of others who whipped or cheered on the long string of baggage animals (Evora horses, Castilian mules, and sturdy burros or donkeys), the various novel sights and sounds incident to the march of Hope's division, together with the appearance of the division itself winding down the deep valleys and up the steep mountains, amid clouds of white dust, out of which the sheen of arms and the waving of colours came incessantly, won Quentin from his sadder thoughts, and he began to feel, after all he had undergone, an emotion of joy on finding himself among his old comrades—a joy that can only be known by a soldier—by one forming a part of that great and permanent, but almost always happy family, a regiment of the line.

The morning was bright and breezy; the large floating clouds cast their flying shadows over the sunlit landscape at times, adding alike to its beauty and the striking effect of the marching columns. Weary of the dark and sallow Spaniards, Quentin's eyes had run along the ranks of the 25th, and their familiar faces, which seemed so fair and ruddy when contrasted with those of the nations they had come to free, were pleasant to look upon. Their colours, with the castle triple-towered and the city motto; the familiar bugle calls, and more than all, the old quick-step of General Leslie, which came floating rearward from time to time when the corps traversed an eminence, all spake to him of his new but moveable home, and the new associations he had learned to love. Cosmo—the impracticable and inscrutable Cosmo Crawford—alone was the feature there that marred his prospects and blighted his pleasure! He felt a sincere regret for poor Isidora, and this was not unmingled with a little selfish dread of her brother, De Saldos, the scowling Trevino, and others, when those guerillas joined the division, which they would probably do in the course of a day or so; and what answer would he make to them when they—and chiefly her brother—asked for the missing

donna? He felt himself, indeed, between the horns of a dilemma, and many unpleasant forebodings mingled with his dreams of a brilliant future. Amid these ideas recurred the longing to write home that the good Lord Rohallion and the gentle Lady Wini-fred—that dear Flora, and the old quartermaster too, might learn something of what he had seen, and done, and undergone since last they parted. Had Cosmo, in any of his letters, ever written to announce that he was serving with the Borderers? This was a question Quentin had frequently asked of himself, and he felt certain that the colonel had *not* done so, as in the other instance, and unless he had been cruelly misrepresented, Lord Rohallion or worthy John Girvan, and his old mentor the quaint dominie, would assuredly have written to him long since. Thus it was evident that in his correspondence with those at home in Carrick, the haughty Master had totally ignored his name.

Quentin's passion for Flora Warrender was a boyish devotion that mingled with all his love and all memories of home. She was still a guiding star to his heart and hopes, the impulse of every thought, the mainspring of every act and deed; and thus Quentin felt that while this dear girl at home loved him, the spiteful hanteur of Cosmo was innocuous and pointless indeed.

As the paymaster of the regiment was riding with the rear-guard, Quentin lost no time in placing in his hands a sufficient number of those gold moidores that were found in the repositories of the late Corporal Raoul, of the 24th Chasseurs à Cheval (the spoil so liberally shared with him by Ribeaupierre), for the purpose of having them transmitted by bill or otherwise to the quartermaster at Rohallion, to repay the good man for the forty pounds he had placed at his disposal on the night he left the castle to return no more; and the fact of this debt being off his conscience made his spirit more buoyant than ever.

They were now marching through the province of Alentejo, the land of wine and oil, the granary of Portugal. Proceeding on a line parallel with the Spanish frontier, they passed through the fortified town of Alegrete, which is moated round by the small river Caia, and there each regiment made its first brief halt for a few minutes before pushing on to Azumar, where the division was to pass the night. Those halts on the line of march were so brief that the bugles of the leading corps always sounded the advance when those of the rear were sounding the halt—ten minutes being the utmost time allotted. On reaching Azumar, the lieutenant-general with his staff, and the colonels of corps, found quarters in the castle of the counts of that name, while the rest of the troops remained without the walls of the town.

The night was clear and starry; a pinkish flush, that lingered

beyond the summits of the Sierra Alpedriera to the westward, showed where the November sun had set. Tents were pitched for the whole force; but, before turning in for the night, Captain Askerne, Monkton, and other Borderers, preferred to sup in a cosy nook, sheltered by a ruined vineyard wall and a group of gigantic chestnuts, under which their servants had lighted a rousing fire of dry branches and wood, hewn down by the pioneers' hatchets. Each added the contents of his havresack to the common stock of the party, and in the same fraternal fashion they shared the contents of their canteens, flasks, and bottles; thus various kinds of liquor, wine—brandy, and aguardiente, were contributed. What the repast lacked in splendour or delicacy was amply made up for by good humour and jollity, and to those who had an eye for the picturesque, that element was not wanting. In the foreground the red glaring fire cast its light on the soldierly fellows we have introduced to the reader, as they sat or lounged on the grass in their regimental greatcoats, and their swords and belts beside them. The great chestnut trees were well-nigh leafless now, and with the rough masonry of the old wall, coated with heavily-leaved vine and ivy, formed a background. Further off, in another direction, were the glares of other watchfires, around which similar groups were gathered—fires that shed their light in fitful flashes on the long rows of white bell-tents, on the dark figures that flitted to and fro, and on the forms of the distant and solitary sentinels, who stood steadily on their posts, the point of each man's bayonet shining like a red star as the flame tipped it with fire.

"Here comes Colville," said Monkton, as that individual, who was somewhat of a dandy and man of fashion, lounged slowly up, and cast himself languidly on the grass. "You have just been with the colonel, I suppose?"

"Yes—a deuced bore—to report the baggage all up with the battalion, the guard dismissed to their tents, and luckily, no casualties, save a mule that we lost in a bog."

"And you found him bland, as usual?"

"I found him quartered, not in the castle, as I expected, but in a deserted house half ruined by the French," replied Colville, smiling; "the only habitable apartment was the kitchen, where our colours are lodged, and there he was eating a tough bullock steak, embers and all, just as his man had cooked it, on the ram-rod of an old pistol. Egad, it was a picture!"

"A dainty kabob we should have called it in Egypt," said Major Middleton, laughing, with a huge magnum bonum bottle of brandy-and-water placed between his fat legs. "Ah, the Honourable Cosmo should not have quitted his guardsman's

comforts at the York Coffee-house, or Betty Neale's fruit-shop in St. James's Street,* to rough it with the line in the Peninsula!"

"Did he compliment you on bringing up your disorderly charge without other loss than the mule?" asked Askerne.

"The devil a bit," yawned Colville; "with his glass stuck in his eye, he gave me one of his cool stares, and said, briefly, 'That will do, sir—to your company.'"

"Ah," grumbled Middleton, shaking his old head, while his pigtail swayed to and fro, "the colonel may have in his veins, good blood, as it is called, but he has in his heart about as much of the milk of human kindness as if it belonged to an old lawyer."

The last part of the sentence, we are bound to add, was partly mumbled into the mouth of the magnum, which at that moment the major applied to his own.

"Here comes Dick Warriston," said Monkton, as an officer muffled in a cloak approached. "Hallo, Dick—how goes it, man?"

"Good evening, gentlemen—thought I should find you out. I heard on the march that our friend the volunteer had turned up again. How are you, Kennedy? glad to see you safe and sound once more," said Quentin's old friend, as they shook hands, and he cast his ample blue muffling aside, displaying his well-built figure, with the scarlet coat, green lapels, and massive gold epaulettes of the Scots Brigade.

"Be seated, Dick."

"Thanks, Askerne."

"Do you prefer a chair, or a sofa?" asked Monkton.

"The sofa, by all means," replied Warriston.

"There is brandy in that jar beside you, and Lisbon wine in the bottle. Here, under these fine old chestnuts, we are quite a select little pic-nic party, out of range of shot, shell, and everything——"

"Except fireflies and mosquitoes, Willie—a poor substitute for the girls, God bless them."

"Whose trumpets are these? what's up now?" asked Monkton, as a sharp cavalry call rang upon the night.

"The 3rd Dragoons of the German Legion, Burgwesel's regiment, are watering their horses."

"Those Germans are regular trumps in their order and discipline," said Monkton; "but as for the Portuguese, damme, they are not worth their liquor. Even the Johnny Crapauds despise them. You have just come in time, Warriston, to hear Kennedy relate to us his interview with the guerilla chief; go on, lad, we are all listening," he added, as he and others proceeded to

* Two favourite resorts of the Household Brigade in those days.

light their cigars or charge their pipes for a thorough bout of smoking.

Quentin told them briefly as much of his adventures as he deemed it necessary to relate or reveal, from the time of his parting from Askerne to the hour of his return to Portalegre. The slaughter of the French prisoners at Herrerueta drew forth loud execrations and unanimous condemnation. His illness at the Villa de Maciera was alone a mystery which he could not explain, and the manner in which he consequently and naturally blundered in narrating this part of his story, drew forth the laughter and the empty jests of the younger portion of his audience.

"Damme," said Monkton, "you were a bold fellow, Kennedy, to become spoony on the sister of such a melo-dramatic individual—such a regular 'heavy villain' as this guerilla De Saldos! Egad, the sight of the fellow, with those black moustachios you have described, would be enough to frighten the French!"

"Very singular style of person, your Spanish friend, I should think," lisped Colville, with his glass in his eye.

"Remarkably so," added Ensign Pimple, raising his white eyebrows; "decidedly a dangerous fellow to have a shindy with!"

"A most interesting individual, no doubt," said Buckle the adjutant; "but begad, not at all suited to a quiet rubber or a little supper party; takes mustard to his lamb, perhaps, and pepper to his eggs, but knows nothing, I'll be bound, of a devilled kidney, and a tumbler of decent whisky toddy. 'Full of strange oaths, and bearded like the pard;' he is all spasms, big boots, and blue fire—eh?"

While they jested thus, and Quentin, with something of annoyance and vexation, looked from one to another, Askerne and Warriston, who were men of graver mood, had been eyeing him attentively.

"My poor lad," said the former, laying a hand kindly on his shoulder, "all this that you have related was a sad trial for you—a great test of courage and discretion for one so young to be subjected to, especially in a foreign country, and among a people so fierce and lawless."

"Your pistols were always my friends," said Quentin, laughing; "I thought of them in every extremity, Captain Askerne; but fortunately never had to use them."

"Then keep them, Quentin, my boy, as a little present from me," said the grenadier.

"But to deprive you——"

"Matters nothing—I took a handsome pair of silver-mounted pops from the holsters of a French officer the other day."

"Askerne has but anticipated me," said Warriston; "I had resolved to give you mine, though they were a gift to me from my father's old friend the Conservator of Scottish Privileges at Campvere, when the Scots Brigade came home and turned their backs upon honest old Holland for ever."

"Well, Kennedy," said Monkton, "we've heard all your adventures, at least *so much* as you wisely, prudently, and discreetly choose to tell us; but I cannot help thinking that we could make a few interesting notes on the time spent in that ruined Château en Espagne. Was the donna young, black-eyed, beautiful, and all that sort of thing, eh?"

"By Jove," added Colville, in the same tone, "you are a regular St. Francis, or St. Anthony! But unlike you, if the donnas on the other side of the frontier think *me* worth their while, I am ready to be subjected to any amount of seduction the dear creatures may choose to put in practice."

Affecting neither to hear Monkton's banter nor Colville's addition, Quentin turned to Askerne, admiring the order that glittered on his left breast.

"This is Portuguese?" said he.

"Yes, Quentin—the Tower and Sword—given to me by the Junta of Oporto for capturing an exploring party, consisting of an officer and ten French dragoons of Ribeaupierre's regiment, whom I cut off in a narrow valley near Portalegre (on the very day after you left us), where I had been sent with twenty of ours to bring in forage."

"Askerne, I do envy you this decoration!" said Quentin, whose eyes sparkled with genuine pleasure and admiration, for medals were almost unknown in the British army then, and the Bath, as now, was only given to field officers; "and they were, you say, dragoons of Ribeaupierre?"

"The same corps with some of whom you fell in among the Spanish mountains. They are quartered in Valencia de Alcántara."

"Ribeaupierre!" said the bantering Monkton; "there is a name for an intelligent young man to go to bed with! It smacks of Anne Radcliffe's mysterious romances of 'Sicily' and 'The Forest.'"

"Yet it is the name of an officer as brave as any in France," said Quentin; "the general who bears it was a subaltern with Napoleon in the Regiment of La Fere, a town on an island of the Oise, where it was originally raised."

"Like that corps, the 24th Chasseurs à Cheval were originally under the monarchy," said Warriston.

"Their uniform is light green, faced and lapelled with white?"

▲ ▲

"Exactly, Quentin—the same uniform worn by the Emperor on almost every occasion," replied Warriston; "the 24th were long known as the Disinterested Regiment of Chartres."

"An honourable title," said Askerne; "how came they to win it, thou man of anecdote?"

"About nineteen years ago, the regiment was quartered at Le Mans, a town of France, situate on the river Sarthe, if you have not forgotten your geography, Rowland. The corps then belonged to Louis Philip Joseph, Duke of Orleans,* the notorious 'Egalité' who was guillotined by the mob in 1793; but it was denominated 'of Chartres,' from the county of the name gifted to his ancestor by Louis XIV. The outrages of the Revolutionists were at their height around the whole of Mans. Day and night the dragoons of Chartres remained with their accoutrements on and their horses saddled ready to assist the magistrates and all peaceable citizens. Every day brought tidings of new horrors, and every night saw the sky reddened by the flames of burning châteaux, and abbey-churches, whose occupants were given to pillage and death. So resolute and orderly were the dragoons of Chartres, so sturdily and bravely did they protect the weak against the strong, enforce the public peace, and conduct the transit of corn for the poor, that the magistrates deemed it necessary to make some acknowledgment of their services. A vote of thanks from the municipality preceded a gratuity of eight hundred livres (no great sum among us, certainly, but a handsome one on the other side of the Channel) to be distributed among the three hundred chasseurs of the corps. In a large bag the money, made, by the way, from the church bells of France, was sent to the colonel, who gave it to the men to dispose of as they pleased; upon which, instead of dividing it among themselves, they resolved unanimously to bestow it upon a portion of the very people who had been tormenting their lives for the last six months. One of the dragoons, a mere youth named Raoul, waited upon the Rector of St. Nicholas in the city of Le Mans and handing him the bag with its contents, said—

"'Monsieur le Recteur, we want not this money. The pay of his Majesty, whom God and St. Louis long preserve! secures us in all that a soldier requires; but the poor, though they are the children of God, are not so blessed. We, the dragoons of Chartres, beg, therefore, that you will accept of this for their use, and put it to the common stock for the aged and the indigent.'"

"And this soldier was named Raoul?" said Quentin, who felt something like a shock when he heard him mentioned.

* Father of Louis Philippe I., late King of the French.

"So the newspapers said," replied Warriston.

Quentin was silent, but the face of one of the dead dragoons whom he had seen at Herreruela—he who had been dragged by his stirrup—came vividly to memory; while, such is the effect of fancy, the moidores that remained in his pocket seemed to become heavy as lead. The hour was late now, and he was completely overcome by fatigue. With a knapsack for a pillow he dropped asleep, while his more hardy comrades sat smoking and drinking, and discussing the fortune of the coming struggle in Spain. As the light of the watch-fire waned and fell in flickering gleams on his features, they seemed pinched, pale, and wan.

"God help the poor fatherless boy," said Captain Warriston, with considerable emotion; "what hard fate brings him here? He seems quite a waif among us, and one that is hardly used by you fellows of the 25th in particular. I wish I had him with me in the Scots Brigade. This last devilish piece of duty has broken him completely down!"

"No, no, Warriston; there is good stuff in him yet," said Rowland Askerne, as he divested his broad shoulders of his own ample cloak, and kindly spread it over the sleeper. "At his age, I had neither father nor mother nor friend to do *this* for me, and I too was, like him, a poor volunteer!"

CHAPTER LXI.

THE ADVANCE INTO SPAIN.

"Oh, life has many a varied tint,
Has many a bright and lovely hue,
Though care upon the brow may print
A sadder, darker colour too.

But hope still casts her rainbow wings
O'er many a scene of care and strife,
And gilds the hours round which she flings
The bright and varied tints of life."—CARPENTER.

SIR JOHN HOPE's division continued to march by the strong old frontier town of Elvas, which crowns a rocky hill not far from where the Guadiana sweeps south towards the sea.

"To-morrow," said Monkton, as he placed the glaring red cockade of Ferdinand VII. on his shako, "we shall be airing our most dulcet Spanish in Old Castile, learning to dance the bolero, to tilt up our legs in the fandango, and to twangle on the guitar."

"I fear, Dick, that Marshal Soult will cut out more serious work for us," said Major Middleton.

"Do we halt at Elvas?" asked some one, as the regiment approached the town.

"Yes, thank Heaven!" exclaimed Monkton. "We have marched twenty miles to-day, and to-night I am going to the camp of the 28th."

"On duty?"

"No; but because they have fallen in with a cask of whisky."

"Whisky!" exclaimed several voices. "Whisky here?"

"The best Farintosh. It was taken from the wreck of a Scotch transport in Maciera Bay, and, may I never see morning, if I don't beg, borrow, or steal at least a canteenful. The Slashers won't refuse me, I am sure."

Next morning, a march of ten miles brought them in sight of the great castle of Badajoz—that place of terrible but immortal memory! Flanked by the waters of the Rivollas and Guadiana, flowing between vineyards and olive groves, it towered in clear sharp outline against the pure blue sky, on cliffs three hundred feet in height, with all its grim batteries and tiers of cannon bristling, row on row; its eight great bastions, each standing forth with one angle bathed in strong yellow sunlight, and the other sunk in deep purple shadow; the rich gothic spires and countless pinnacles of its churches and convents, all shining in the warm glow, while, in the background, extended far away the long green wavy outline of the mountains of Toledo.

Kellerman and Victor had alike been foiled before it, as the Portuguese had been in the days of the Archduke John of Austria, and now the scarlet and yellow banners of King Ferdinand VII. were still waving triumphantly upon the towers of San Cristoval, San Roque, and the Forts of Picurina and Pardaleras. The united clangour of, perhaps, five hundred bells, came merrily upon the morning breeze, a welcome to the British. Then a white puff of smoke from the battery of the grand old citadel announced the first gun of a royal salute. Another and another followed, flashing from the dark embrasures, while the pale wreaths curled upward and floated away, till the whole round of twenty-one pieces was complete; but, as the city was two miles distant, each report came faintly to the ear, and at an interval after the flash. Ere long, the twenty-eight arches of the noble bridge of the Guadiana rang beneath the hoofs of our Light Dragoons, as the advanced guard began to cross, and, amid the clangour of bells in spire and campanile, and the "vivas" of the assembled thousands, the reiterated shouts of "Viva los Ingleses!" "Viva los Escotes!" the infantry found themselves

defiling through the lower streets of Badajoz and entering Spain.

Eyes dark and bright sparkled with pleasure and welcome from many an open lattice, and many a fan and veil were waved, and many a white hand kissed to the passing troops, as, with colours waving and bayonets fixed, they passed under the gaily crowded balconies on their way to the Guadiana. Escorted by a guard of Spanish lancers, mounted on beautiful jennets, a quaint old coach, such as we only see depicted in fairy tales or pantomimes, came slowly rumbling forward on its carved and gilded wheels. It was gorgeous with burnished brasses and coats armorial, but was shaped like a gigantic apple pie, drawn by six sleek fat mules; and each pair had a little lean dark postilion, in cocked-hat and epaulettes, floundering away in boots like water-buckets, while, at the doors on both sides, hung two tripod stools, as the means of ingress and egress. But, in front of this remarkable conveyance, the advanced guard halted with carbine on thigh, the officers saluting and the trumpets sounding, while the general and staff approached bareheaded, with hat in hand, for in the recesses of this apple-pie were the most Reverend Padres en Dios, the Archbishop of Santiago, the Bishop Suffragan of Compostella, Senores the Captain-general, the Alcalde of Badajoz, and a great many more, in civic robes and military uniforms, with crosses and medals, and all of these persons clambered out of the interior, and descended on terra firma by means of the three-legged stools aforesaid, coach-steps being as yet unknown in the realms of his Most Catholic majesty.

"Well," said Monkton, "this turn-out beats all the buggies I ever saw. By Jove! it is like Noah's ark on wheels. Such a team it would be to 'tool' to Epsom with!"

We shall skip the long and solemn, the flattering and bombastic speeches made by the Spanish officials, and the curt but manly responses given by the British on this auspicious occasion. Suffice it to say that, after a brief halt, the division continued its route by easy marches. The green hill of Albuera ere long became visible on the right flank; but the day passed without any tidings being heard of the guerillas of Don Baltasar de Saldos, a circumstance which, in the course of conversation with Buckle the adjutant, the Master of Rohallion contrived that Quentin should know. Naturally he felt anxious about the matter, and feared in his heart that perhaps he had personally something to do with the non-appearance of this famous partisan chief. Twenty-four miles beyond Badajoz brought the division, with all the heavy artillery of the army, to Montijo, a little town of Estremadura, where a camp was formed for the night near the

Guadiana. As contrasted with "the Granary of Portugal," through which they had latterly passed, the barrenness of wasted and long-neglected Estremadura impressed all with poor ideas of Spain.

"The great Condé was right," said Warriston, as the little group of the other evening assembled again, in nearly a similar manner, to sup by their watchfire, which was lighted near a deserted pottery in a field where the Indian corn had grown and been reaped; "right indeed, when he said if you wish to know what actual want is, carry on a war in Spain!"

"And the comforts of a Peninsular tour like ours are in no way enhanced when one's exchequer is low," said Monkton.

"True, Willie, and there is a wonderful sympathy between the animal spirits and the breeches-pocket."

"And I, for one, can show 'a regular soldier's thigh;' my purse has long since collapsed."

"Line it with these, Monkton," said Quentin, slipping a half-dozen moidores into his hand.

"What are these?"—moidores, by the gods of the Greek! But thanks, my friend, I shall pay you at San Pedro, where I shall bring our paymaster to book. I could lavish a colonel's pay, if I had it, which is never likely to be the case, for we're a devilish slow regiment, Quentin."

"But some of our Highland corps are slower still," remarked an officer.

"I have known a fellow to be four years an ensign in one of them, and every month at least once under fire all the time," said Askerne.

"They never sell out or purchase in, and then there is no killing them by bullets, starvation, or fatigue."

"For the baggage guard to-morrow, Mr. Monkton," said old Sergeant-major Calder, approaching the group, who were lounging on the grass; "for the colours, Mr. Hardinge and Mr. Boyle." He saluted and retired, while Monkton apostrophized the baggage guard in pretty round terms.

"I should like to have halted one night at Badajoz," said Colville; "there is a theatre there, and other means of spending money which smack of civilization. Conyers——"

"Who's he?"

"Conyers of the 10th Hussars, one of Hope's extra aides-de-camp, says there are some beautiful girls to be seen on the promenade of poplars, the Prado beside the river, in the evening, where they all go veiled, with fireflies strung in their hair, producing a very singular effect."

"I would rather be whispering soft nothings into their pretty

ears and over their white shoulders than be bivouacking here," said Monkton.

"I believe you, my friend; but perhaps the knife of some devil of a lover or *cortejo* might give your whisperings a point you never expected," replied Askerne.

"Try a sip from my canteen," said Monkton; "it contains some of the stuff I got the other night at the camp of the 28th, and better you'll find it than the *aguardiente* of the Spanish Hot-tentots. Take a pull, Quentin, as a nightcap, and then turn in under that laurel bush and sleep if you can, under your own bays, till the bugle sounds the 'rouse.'"

Remembering the injunctions of the worthy Padre Florez, Quentin declined.

"Well, well, boy, as you please," said Monkton, slinging his canteen behind him; "but what the devil's that? Cavalry!"

"It is the staff—the general," exclaimed Askerne, as they all started to their feet, and proceeded to buckle on their swords, as Sir John Hope, with several mounted staff officers and commanders of corps, among whom was Cosmo Crawford, approached slowly, checking their horses, and talking with considerable animation; while their flowing scarlet and white plumes, their cocked-hats, aiguillettes, and orders, were all visible in the glare of the watchfire, on which the servants were heaping fresh branches for the night.

"What is this you say, Conyers?" Sir John was heard to ask; "repeat it to Colonel Crawford of the 25th. You bring us——"

"Most serious intelligence, sir," replied Conyers, who wore the blue and scarlet of the 10th Hussars, and who seemed flushed and excited by a long ride. "I have just come on the spur from Badajoz, and there tidings have reached the Captain-general that yesterday the Spaniards, under Don Joachim Blake, were again completely discomfited at Espinosa, and that the Estremaduran army, which was beaten the day before at Gamonal, is demoralized or cut to pieces; and that the first, second, and fourth corps of the French army, seventy thousand strong, are free to act in *any* quarter."

"First, second, and fourth—these are the corps of Victor, Bessières, and Lefebvre."

"Exactly, Sir John."

"If they march against us, the whole siege and field artillery of the army may be lost!" exclaimed Hope.

"Nor is this all, sir," continued the aide-de-camp, speaking rapidly and with growing excitement; "the movement made by the guerillas of Baltasar de Saldos towards the hill of Albuera, to cover our advance, has been anticipated!"

"*Anticipated!*"

"Yes, Sir John."

"How, how?" asked several voices.

"General de Ribeaupierre with his whole brigade, consisting of the 24th Chasseurs à Cheval, the Westphalian Light Horse, numbering five hundred and sixty sabres, and the Dragoons of Napoleon, five hundred strong, aided by Laborde's corps and some field guns, issued from Valencia de Alcantara, attacked the guerillas in a valley near San Vincente, and captured their five pieces of artillery, killing the Conde de Maciera, a captain of Lancers, who made three charges to retake them; so De Saldos informs the Captain-general at Badajoz, that there must be treachery somewhere."

"Treachery," reiterated the general, while Cosmo Crawford glanced with a malicious smile towards the group where Quentin, with others, stood listening to all this with the deepest interest, for until the "Courier," or some English paper reached them, they were often ignorant for months of what was enacted in other parts of Spain.

"Don Baltasar is on the march, however, to join us," resumed Captain Conyers; "he has made a détour by the left bank of the Valverde, and by to-morrow evening hopes to make his report to you in person."

"I thank you, Captain Conyers," said the general; "come, gentlemen, this is not so bad after all! To-morrow night we halt at Merida."

"Had you not better despatch a message to De Saldos, saying so," suggested an officer.

"My horse is used up, sir," said Captain Conyers, smiling; "he has gone forty-five miles, on a feed of chopped whin, over the most infernal roads too!"

"There is that young volunteer of ours," said Cosmo; "he acquitted himself so well before, Sir John——"

"That we should give him an opportunity of doing so again," interrupted the lieutenant-general.

"A good idea!" muttered some of the staff.

"Mr. Kennedy," said Cosmo, beckoning forward the anxious listener; "a message saying where we shall halt to-morrow is to be despatched to the guerilla De Saldos; you will, of course, only be too happy to hear it?"

"I beg most respectfully to decline, sir," said Quentin, emphatically, and with growing anger.

"What the devil, sirrah?" Cosmo was beginning.

"Ha—indeed, and wherefore?" asked the general.

"I am scarcely able to keep up with the regiment, General

Hope," replied Quentin; "I have been seriously ill, and am more fit for hospital than for duty."

The general knit his brows, and Cosmo dealt Quentin, through his eyeglass, a glance of cool scrutiny, that deepened into withering scorn or hate without alloy.

"Very well, we must send an orderly dragoon," said Sir John Hope, turning away.

"Take care, Mr. Kennedy," said Cosmo, "lest at a future time this refusal may be remembered against you to your disadvantage."

"Crawford doesn't like you, Quentin," said Askerne, after the staff rode away; it is a great pity, for, though cold and haughty, he is a brave and good officer."

"Damme, don't scoff at the service, Askerne," said Monkton, with mock severity.

Poor Quentin had a heavy heart that night; we are not sure, that he did not shed some bitter and unavailing tears, for the forebodings of coming evil banished sleep when he most needed it, and crushed the soul within him. But his comrades as usual sat long by the watch-fire, passing the night with song, jest, and anecdote. They had neither care for the present nor fear for the future, and their jollity formed a strong contrast to his forlorn sadness.

"I think we should now turn in," said Monkton; "we march betimes to-morrow; to your tents, O Borderers! But what the deuce is that?"

"The générale," said Colville.

"Already!"

"Already, Monkton; and there sounds the gathering of the Gordons in the streets of Montijo."

"The nights are very short in the Penin-in-insula," said Monkton, scrambling up and making several attempts to buckle his belt.

"You'll have to sober yourself on the march, Willie," said Askerne, giving him a rough shake.

"By Jove! to have to fall in when one should go to sleep—to nod and drowse and dream while tramping on and on, your nose coming every minute down on the tin canteen or the knapsack of the man in front of you! It is miserable work; but what with contract powder that wont explode, ammunition shoes warranted not to last, diseased bullocks shot while at fever heat and eaten half raw, we are little likely to beat the French, either in fighting or marching."

"Unless, like them, we learn to hang an occasional commissary or contractor," said old Middleton, as he sprang with agility on his horse; and the regiment formed open column of companies in the dark, for daybreak was yet an hour distant.

CHAPTER XLII.

RETROGRESSION.

"Lucius, the horsemen are returned from viewing
 The number, strength, and posture of our foes,
 Who now encamp within a short hour's march.
 On the high point of yonder western tower,
 We ken them from afar, the setting sun
 Plays on their shining arms and burnished helmets,
 And covers all the field with gleams of fire."—*Cato*, Act v.

THE noon next day, while the division was traversing the grassy plain amid which lies the ancient city of Merida, the sound of distant firing on their right flank announced the repulse of some of the cavalry of Laborde's corps, when making a reconnoissance. The light white puffs of the musketry that curled along the green hill-sides, came nearer and nearer, and it soon became known that the band of the formidable De Saldos el Estudiante, above two thousand strong, had joined the division of Sir John Hope; as the newspaper of Lord Rohallion had it, a measure fully arranged "by the skill and courage" of our young volunteer. But though the army continued its march for several days, no recognition of his service, in orders or otherwise, ever reached him from head-quarters, and happily for himself, he saw nothing of the dreaded Baltasar, who fortunately was left in the rear, with an open sabre cut.

Ribeaupierre's cavalry brigade abandoned Valencia de Alcantara without firing a shot, on its flank being turned, and fell back, no one knew exactly where or in what direction.

Hope's division halted at Merida, a place eminently calculated to excite the deepest interest in the thinking or historical visitor; its great bridge of more than eighty arches spanning the broad waters of the Guadiana; the ruins of its Roman castle, which Alfonso the Astrologer gifted to the knights of Santiago, and in the vaults of which Baltasar's guerillas had thrust some unfortunate French prisoners; its triumphal arch of Julius Cæsar, under which the division passed with drums beating and colours flying, and its crumbling amphitheatre:—Merida, of old the Rome of Spain, and the home of the aged and disabled soldiers of the 5th and 10th legions of Augustus Cæsar, whose great pyramid still towers there, amid the ruins of its contemporaries.

There was ample accommodation in the town for the officers of the division; but yet not enough to prevent a dispute about rank,

or precedence, or something else, between a Captain Winton of the Borderers, and an officer of the German Legion. So they met about daybreak near the Baths of Diana. The former was attended by Askerne of the Grenadiers, and the latter by Major Burgwesel of his own corps, and at the second fire Winton shot his man dead, Cosmo coolly lending his pistols for the occasion, without comment or inquiry, either of which would have been ungentlemanly, according to the temper or spirit of the service then. Prior to this event, on the evening the division halted, Quentin, about the hour of sunset, had wandered to the old Roman aqueduct which lies near the city, and he remained for a time lost in thought while surveying its mouldering arches, and the piles of columns, bases, flowered capitals, enriched friezes, Corinthian entablatures, and broken statues, lying amid the weeds and long grass, the remains of the once superb temples, ruined by the Goths and Moors; and perhaps he was thinking of his old dominie at Rohallion, and the worthy pedant's profound veneration for the ancient days of Rome, the mistress of all the then known world. The place was solitary and almost buried amid old vineyards and groves of now leafless trees. Under one of the mouldering arches, from which, notwithstanding the lateness of the season, masses of luxuriant creepers were yet hanging, Quentin lingered to admire the scenery and the glory of the golden sunset, which spread its farewell radiance over the vast plain, of which Merida, from its situation on a lofty eminence, commands a view in every direction—the olive groves yet green and waving in the breeze, and the winding Guadiana, while far away in distance, all tinted in dusky blue and russet brown, but edged with flaming gold, stretched the mountain sierras, range over range, towards the north. From the pleasant contemplation of this evening landscape he was suddenly roused by seeing a pair of fierce dark eyes glaring into his own. It was the guerilla Trevino, of whom it seems a mockery to give his once prefix of Padre!

"So, senor," said he, with a terrible grimace, "we meet again, do we?"

"It seems so, senor," replied Quentin, haughtily, as he stepped back a pace, "and what then?"

"Only that I find you in very bad company."

"I am alone, senor."

"Well, and you alone form the company I refer to," replied the Spaniard, insolently, and with a savage grin, while the fingers of his right hand clutched the haft of his knife, and his thumb was firmly planted on the pommel. There was no mistaking this action or his air for anything else than open hostility, so Quentin

warily stepped back another pace, and glanced hastily round to be assured that no other guerillas were lurking near, and then grasping the barrel of his musket, which was unloaded, he stood ready on his defence against an antagonist who possessed, perhaps, twice his bodily strength.

"What do you mean, Senor Trevino, by accosting me in this manner?" he demanded.

"I mean, *hombre*, that I have been lately at the Convent of Saint Engracia, and that Donna Isidora has *not* been heard of there; so, in the meantime, I and two or three others have sworn across our knives to kill you, that is all; leaving to time to reveal what you have done with her."

Something of this kind was what Quentin had long dreaded; but disdaining any attempt to explain or expostulate, and exasperated by the injustice to which he was subjected, he clutched his musket and said sternly—

"Stand back, fellow!"

"Ha! *perro y ladron* (dog and thief)—you will have it, then!"

With head stooped, body crouching, and knife drawn, the Spaniard was springing like a tiger upon Quentin, when the brass butt of Brown Bess, swung by no sparing or erring hand, fell full on his left temple, from whence it slid very unpleasantly down on his collar-bone, and tumbled him bleeding and senseless on the ground.

After this, Quentin, who was in no mood to feel any compunction about the affair, turned and left him to recover as he might, resolving, until in a more secure neighbourhood, not to indulge his taste for the picturesque or antique, and feeling exceeding thankful that he had not left his musket as usual in his tent.

"You were just in time, sir," said a voice, as Quentin turned to leave the ruined aqueduct; "an instant later and that Spanish thief had put his knife into you."

The speaker was Allan Grange, of the 25th, who, stooping down, took from Trevino's relaxed hand his knife, a very ugly pig-butcher-like weapon. A guerilla, doubtless some friend of Trevino's, was hastening forward at this moment, but on seeing Quentin joined by a comrade he drew back a little way, and so the affair ended for the time; but this was not the last that Quentin was fated to hear of the encounter.

By the ruinous town of Medellin, where the Guadiana was fabled of old to rise, after running twenty miles under ground; by the wretched town of Miajadas, and by Truxillo, with its feudal towers and Moorish walls, when the French had ruined alike the house in which Pizarro was born and the noble palace of the Condé de Lopera, the division continued its march amid rough and stormy

weather, and, after passing Talavera de la Reyna—so called from the queen of ^{Alonzo XI.}, to distinguish it from other places of the same name—halted, on the 22nd day of November, at the Escorial, that magnificent palace, twenty-five miles from Madrid, built by Philip II. in commemoration of the battle of St. Quentin, a holy personage, to whom he solemnly dedicated it. With his regiment, our hero bivouacked outside the little village of Escorial de Abajo. The night was a fearful one of storm. Over the bare and desolate country the winter wind swept in tempestuous gusts, and the rain fell in torrents, swelling all the streams of the Guadarama—for the weather was completely broken now. In that horrible bivouac poor Quentin lost his blanket—his whole household furniture. Near him lay a soldier's wife with a sick infant; he spread it over both and left it with them; when the regiment shifted its ground next day the mother and child dropped by the wayside, so Quentin never saw them or his blanket again. Here, as Sir John Moore had foreseen, and as General Hope had stated his fears to Cosmo, the enemy did *press forward* from Valladolid and Tordesillas, and the advanced posts of their cavalry being reported in sight, strong guards were posted and picquets thrown forward in front of the Escorial. This forward movement of the French threatened to cut off Hope's communication with Sir John Moore, who was then at Salamanca, and might lose his artillery. To prevent this, and effect a junction with the main body under the general, Hope marched from the Escorial on the 27th November, and crossed the long and lofty mountain chain of the Guadarama, the cliffs of which are so steep that the Spaniards of old likened them to straight spindles. Moving by Villa Castin, a market-town at their base, he halted at Avila, on the right bank of the Ajada, where Quentin was billeted in the same house with Monkton, in that dark and narrow street in which the spiritual Maria Theresa was born—"Nuestra Serifica Madre," as she is named by the old Castilians.

The enemy's light cavalry were still pressing on, and at times their carbines were heard popping in the distance, when responding to our skirmishers. It was the gloomy morning of the first day of December; the rain was still falling in torrents, and the sky looked dark and louring. Save an occasional exchange of shots between outpost and petty skirmishers, nothing of interest had taken place with the enemy, and the toil of this retrograde movement dispirited the troops. Even Monkton, one of the most heedless men in the regiment, was sullen and spiritless. Wearied by their long march, he and Quentin sat in their bare and miserable billet, silent and moody. It was in the house of a hatter, or maker of sombreros, facing the dark and narrow street, which was

overshadowed by a gigantic parish church, the bells of which were ringing in honour of the British, and their notes came mournfully on the passing gusts of wind. It was indeed a wild evening in Avila. The rain was pouring down in one uniform and ceaseless sheet, the wind bellowing in the thoroughfares with a melancholy sound, and the swollen Ajada was boiling in foam against the piers of its ancient bridge.

A miserable meal of tough beef, boiled with a little rice in a pipkin, had been served up by Monkton's servant, a poor half-starved fellow, whose single shirt had long since been reduced to its collar and wristbands, whose red coat showed innumerable darns and patches, and who now regretted the days when he forsook his plough on Tweedside to become a soldier. With their feet planted on a brasero of charcoal, cloaks muffled about them for warmth, and cigars in their mouths, our two warriors ruefully surveyed the bare whitewashed walls of their room, and then looked at each other.

"Rain, rain!" exclaimed Monkton; "what an infernal climate! And this is the land of grapes and sunshine! I've never seen such drops since I was in the West Indies with our flank companies, at the capture of Martinique."

At that moment, amid the lashing of the rain on wall and window, the roar of the wind, and the rush of the gorged gutters, the tramp of a horse was heard, and the voice of Buckle, who was brigade-adjutant for the day, was heard shouting—"Fall in, the outlying picquets of the 1st brigade—sound bugle!"

But his voice and the half-strangled bugle notes were alike borne away by the tempest.

A heavy malediction escaped Monkton. This worthy sub had puffed at his fragrant Havannah till he had smoked himself into such a soothed state that he was quite indisposed "to be bothered about anything or anybody," as he said; and now he remembered that on halting the sergeant-major had warned him for out-picquet. He sprang up and kicked the brasero aside, sending the smouldering charcoal flying right and left.

"Out-picquet!" he exclaimed, "and the rain coming down in bucketfuls! Damme, who would be a soldier abroad, while there are chimneys to sweep at home?"

A smart single knock now came to the door, as he belted his sword beneath his cloak.

"Come in—is that you, sergeant major?"

"Yes, sir," said old Norman Calder, who was muffled in his grey great-coat, which, as he said, "smoked like a killogie."

"Where are these infernal picquets parading?"

"I've just come to show you, sir; they are falling in under the

arcades opposite the Bishop's palace, where the staff are quartered. Fresh ammunition has just been served out to all."

"That looks like work."

"Yes, sir; the enemy's cavalry are in force upon the road towards Villa Castin, in our rear."

"We have heard little else since we fell back from the Escorial."

As a volunteer is always the first man for any perilous duty, Quentin buttoned his great-coat over his accoutrements and musket, and set out to join Monkton's picquet, which Buckle was parading, with several others, under some quaint old arcades of stone, above which the house, with broad balconies and rich entablatures, rose to a considerable height. The daylight was nearly gone now, and already the half-drenched and half-fed soldiers looked pale and weary.

"As the weather has been frequently wet, and as the duty of to-night is an important one, you will be careful, gentlemen, to inspect the arms, flints, and ammunition of your picquets," said Buckle; "and as the prickers may not be deemed sufficient to indicate the state of the touch-holes, the butts will be brought to the front."

"Butts to the front," an order then in use, was given by Monkton and each officer in succession, after which the ranks were opened, and every man blew down the barrel of his musket, so that by applying a hand to the touch-hole the real state of the vent was ascertained by the inspector.

"Handle arms—with ball cartridge, prime, and load—secure arms!" followed rapidly, and away went the out-picquets, double-quick, through rain and mire, wind and storm, to their several posts, Monkton's being a mile and a half beyond the bridge of the Ajada, in tolerably open ground, interspersed with groups of little trees.

Under one of these he sheltered his picquet, and two hundred yards in front of it posted his line of sentinels, with orders not to walk to and fro, but to stand steadily on their posts, to look straight to their front, to fire on all who could not give the countersign, and to keep up a regular communication with each other and with those of the picquets on both flanks; and then each man was left for his solitary hour, the time allotted for such duty when in front of an enemy. About daybreak, after a short nap in the thicket, and after imbibing a sip from his canteen of rum grog, Quentin found himself on this solitary but important duty, posted on the centre of the highway, gazing steadily into the murky obscurity before him, and thanking Heaven in his heart that the rain had ceased, and that the cold and biting December wind was passing away.

CHAPTER LXIII.

A MESSAGE FROM THE ENEMY.

"'Tis true, unruffled and serene I've met
 The common accidents of life, but here
 Such an unlooked-for storm of ills falls on me
 It beats down all my strength—I cannot bear it."

ADDISON.

THIS was not the first occasion on which Quentin had enacted the part of sentinel; but never had he done so with the knowledge that the enemy was before him, and perhaps at that moment closer than he had any idea of, among the mist that obscured the landscape. All was quiet in front and rear; save the drip of the last night's rain from an over-charged leaf, or the croaking of the bull-frogs in a marsh close by, not a sound broke the stillness. The dull grey winter morning stole slowly in; the distant mountain peaks of the Guadarama grew red, but all else remained opaque and dim, save the jagged summits of that lofty *sierra*—a Spanish word very descriptive of a range of conical hills, being evidently (as we are informed by a letter of the dominie) derived from *serra*, the Latin word for a saw.

On the slope of a hill, at a little distance from where Quentin stood, was a gibbet, a strong post about twenty feet high, having two horizontal beams crosswise on its summit, and from these four arms there hung four robbers, each by the neck, and their long black hair waved over their faces as they swung slowly to and fro in the morning wind, with the ravens wheeling around them, and perching on the arms of the gibbet. The bull-frogs in the marsh croaked vigorously, and like every other place in Spain, even this fetid swamp had its legend; for here it was that the Cid, Rodrigo de Bivar, when proceeding at the head of twenty young and brave hidalgos, on a pilgrimage to the shrine of Saint James at Compostella, saw an aged and half-naked leper in the midst of the slough. Leaping from his horse, Rodrigo dragged the poor man forth, and to the wrath and disgust of his mail-shirted companions, seated him on his own charger, Babieca; thereafter he set him at table with them, and finally, in the extremity of his humility and Christian charity, shared his bed with him. In the night the cavalier awoke, and beheld the leper standing on a cloud above his bed, midway between the floor and ceiling, surrounded by a blaze of light and clad in white and shining robes; and ere he vanished he informed the Cid that he was Saint Lazarus, who had taken the form of a leper to test his

charity, which was so commendable that God had granted he should prosper in all things, but chiefly in his wars against the infidel dogs who were troubling all Spain. As the mists drew upward, Quentin could see about half a mile distant in front, a line of French cavalry videttes, each sitting motionless in his saddle, and both horse and rider looking like one huge and misshapen figure, as the scarlet cloak of the latter was spread over the crupper of his charger behind him. While gazing steadily and with deep interest at the enemy, he was somewhat surprised to see two French dragoons suddenly ride from their own lines straight along the road towards his post. That they were deserters—his first idea—was impossible, as they rode leisurely and were not fired on by their picquets. By their light green uniforms and brass helmets with flowing plumes he soon saw that they were Chasseurs à Cheval, and that one, who rode a few paces in front of the other, was an officer, with a white handkerchief tied as an extempore flag of truce to the point of his sabre. Monkton, and the main body of the picquet, were rather beyond hail, and for a minute Quentin was irresolute what to do; but before he could decide upon anything, the officer came fairly up to him, and checking his horse on the bit, said in tolerable English—

“Monsieur le soldat, we have come hither on an errand of mercy. An old and valued officer of our corps is sinking under the fatigue of last night and the suffering incident to an old wound, so we have ridden over to see if there is not at least one brave and generous man among you, who will give us a mouthful of eau-de-vie or any other spirit to keep him alive; for though our surgeons order this, *sangdieu*, we haven't a drop in the whole brigade.”

The interchange of many civilities, wine, biscuits, tobacco, and newspapers, frequently took place between our outposts and the French during the Peninsular wars. To such a length was this eventually carried, that they frequently went over to smoke at each other's watchfires; but a very stringent order of the Duke of Wellington put a stop to these visits.

Before the speaker had concluded his singular request, Quentin had time to recognise in him the French lieutenant whom he had so signally befriended at Herrerueta.

“Monsieur de Ribeaupierre,” said he, “don't you remember me?”

“*Parbleu!* yes—this is fortunate, my friend,” said the other, grasping Quentin's hand; “I am glad to see you again, but not with the musket still—what! no promotion yet?”

“I am still but a volunteer.”

"Ah—you should serve the emperor!"

"And then, we have not yet fought a battle."

"Had you not fallen back so rapidly on our advance from Valladolid and Tordesillas, we should have had the pleasure of capturing and escorting you all to France."

"Thanks for your good intentions."

"I still hope to see them carried out," said Ribeaupierre, laughing; "but here come some of your people," he added, waving his handkerchief, as Monkton, who had witnessed this interview, came hurrying forward, with his sergeant, and a section of the picquet with bayonets fixed.

Quentin rapidly acquainted Monkton with the object of the Frenchman's visit, adding—"He is Ribeaupierre, the French officer of whom I told you—son of the brigadier of the same name."

"Ah—indeed; then I have much pleasure in meeting him," said Monkton, as he and the officer saluted each other very courteously.

On inquiry being made, it was discovered that the sergeant of the picquet, Ewen Donaldson, alone had any brandy, so he readily poured the contents of his canteen into the flask of Ribeaupierre, who, after thanking him profusely, handed it to his orderly, saying—

"Paul, mon camarade, away with this for our patient; use your spurs, and I shall follow."

The dragoon galloped away. Ribeaupierre offered a five-franc piece to Donaldson, who being a gruff Scotchman declined it so bluffly that the young officer coloured to the peak of his helmet.

"You will join me in a cigar then, mon camarade?" said he, politely proffering his open cigar case. Then saluting Monkton again, he said, "Excuse me, monsieur l'officier, if, before returning, I speak a word or two in your presence with the friend to whom I owe my life—whom my good mother remembers every night in her prayers, for I told her of our adventures near Valencia."

"Your mother, monsieur? Is it possible that she is with the army at this season?"

"She is with the Emperor's court at Madrid, and hopes to see you all set sail from Lisbon. By the way," added Ribeaupierre, with a smile of waggery, "your lively Spanish friend, Donna Isidora, will be quite consoled when I tell her that I have seen you—alive and well too! She thinks of you with remorse and tears, as one whom she had poisoned in mistake, she says. How came all that to pass? We sent a patrol to search the Villa de Maciera for you, but no trace of you could be found."

"Is she still in your hands?" asked Quentin, with an expression of interest.

"Yes, monsieur," replied the other, caressing his moustache.

"A prisoner?"

"*Peste!* What an idea!"

"I trust you—you have treated her well and kindly?"

"She shall answer for herself, some time hence."

"A prisoner! Poor Isidora! She will be quite inconsolable."

"Inconsolable? Mon ami, you forget in whose charming society she is! We fellows of the 24th Chasseurs are unrivalled in conversational powers and the general art of pleasing. She spoke of you very often—thought you a very nice fellow—but so quiet—so *triste!*"

Quentin was glad that Monkton, whom he did not wish to hear all this, had gradually gone beyond earshot.

"And she—she——" he was beginning with emotions of an annoyance and mortification.

"Be assured that she became quite consoled among the 24th, and now, as Madame Jules de Marboeuf (for my comrade Jules took her off my hands), she has learned to think that we Frenchmen are not such bad fellows, after all."

"This is indeed news!" exclaimed Quentin; "Isidora married—married, and to a Frenchman!"

"Ah—la belle tigress is quite tamed now; but *I* must begone. *Ouf—peste—tonnerre de Dieu!* what a night we have had, monsieur," he added to Monkton, who again approached. "I have been so soaked that I felt as if the rain was filtering through the marrow of my bones. If you effect your junction with M. le Général Moore, I suppose we shall have the little variety of a general action."

"It is extremely probable," replied Monkton, smiling at the French officer's free and easy manner.

"That will indeed be gay—we are so anxious to measure swords with your cavalry. Do you know that General Foy, in one of his despatches, attributes your accidental victories——"

"*Accidental?*"

"That is the word, my friends——"

"For Roleia and Vimiera—eh?"

"Yes, for anything you like—Trafalgar and the Nile, if you please."

"Well, and Foy attributes them——"

"To two great elements you Anglais possess."

"Powder and pluck?"

"No—rum and ros-bif—ha, ha! *Au revoir*—we shall meet again," and, putting spurs to his horse, Ribeaupierre, keeping his

white handkerchief still displayed, rode across to his own lines, turning repeatedly to kiss his hand, as his horse caracoled along.

Relieved from his post, Quentin rejoined the main body of the picquet in the grove of trees, where he remained apart from the men and full of thought; for though his self-esteem was somewhat piqued on learning that Isidora had so easily forgot him, he was greatly pleased to hear of her safety, and hoped that the circumstance, when known, would relieve him from the hostility of Baltasar and his ragamuffins, of whom he not unnaturally had a constant dread. These ideas were mingled with something of amusement—that the brother-in-law of Baltasar, the most ferocious of Spanish patriots, should be a Frenchman!

Just as the picquets rejoined their regiments, prior to the whole division moving from Avila, Rowland Askerne called Quentin aside, and, with a face expressive of extreme concern, said—"I wish to speak particularly with you, Quentin—there is evidently something most unpleasant on the tapis."

"Regarding what—or who?"

"You, my friend."

"Me—how—in what way?" asked Quentin.

"Baltasar de Saldos, the guerilla, who has been so long in the rear, wounded, has now joined the division, and has been at the quarters of Sir John Hope in the Bishop's palace."

"Surely, that matters nothing to me," said Quentin, with growing anger and alarm.

"Listen. I was in the street, speaking with the colonel, when the general, who was bowing out the formidable guerilla, beckoned him, and on their meeting I heard him say—'The information just given me, Colonel Crawford, by the guerilla, fully corroborates the character you gave me at Portalegre of that young fellow—what is his name?'"

"'Kennedy.'"

"'Ah, yes; you remember?'"

"'Yes, Sir John,' replied the colonel, turning rather pale, I thought, as he glanced towards me."

"'But I have spoken with Major Middleton of yours, and unlike you, he gives him the very highest character. How am I to reconcile these discrepancies?'"

"Crawford then mumbled I know not what; but it was something about a previous knowledge of you—of old contumacy and insolence unknown to others; then I turned away, as it was alike impossible and improper to listen."

These tidings filled Quentin's breast with rage, alarm, and intense mortification. Here was a secret enmity against which there was no contending, bringing with it accusations of which

he knew neither the nature nor the name. One moment he felt inclined to rush into the presence of the general, and boldly demand to know of what his hostile colonel had accused him; and then there was De Saldos too! But in approaching Sir John Hope, he remembered that the proper mode could only be in writing, the letter being transmitted by the captain of the company to which he was attached, under cover to Cosmo, his particular enemy (who might then forward it with such comments as he chose), for such is the rule and etiquette of the service.

Before he could resolve on what was to be done, while fretting and chafing in his billet, and just as the bugles were sounding the warning for the march, the old sergeant-major, Norman Calder, entered, accompanied by two soldiers of the light company, with their bayonets fixed. The faces of his three visitors expressed considerable compunction, for our young volunteer was a favourite with the whole corps.

"Mr. Kennedy," said Calder, "I have come on a sorrowful errand to you; but I only obey the orders given to me by my superior officers."

"And these orders are, sir?" demanded Quentin, furiously.

"To disarm you and march you a close prisoner with the quarter-guard."

"For what reason?" asked Quentin, in a faint voice.

"I dinna ken, sir—I have only Colonel Crawford's orders."

"Of what am I accused?"

"That is more than I say, sir; but if you are innocent you have nothing to fear. Take courage and set a stout heart to a steep braise, as we say at home, and you may turn the flanks of fortune yet," added the worthy old non-commissioned officer, patting Quentin on the shoulder, for he saw that this open and public, and most unmerited humiliation before the entire division, cut him to the soul, and crushed all his spirit for the time.

* * * * *

The division marched about sunrise, and Quentin, instead of being as usual with the grenadiers of the gallant Borderers, found himself trudging with the quarter-guard, a special prisoner, and kept apart from all others under a small escort, that marched on each side of him with muskets loaded and bayonets fixed; for not being a commissioned officer, there could be no other arrest for him than a close one. And thus, with a heavy heart, full almost to bursting with mortification and grief, ignorant of the accusations against him and of what was to be his fate, he marched with the division towards the ancient city of Alva on the Tormes, which they entered on the evening of the 4th of

December, and there, as they were to halt for seven days, Quentin was informed by Lieutenant Buckle that he was to be tried by a general court-martial. He felt that all, indeed, was over with him now!

CHAPTER LXIV.

THE PRISONER.

"I would my weary course were o'er,
 Yet scarce can look for end save this,
 To dash to pieces on the shore,
 Or founder in the dark abyss.
 Fond thoughts, sweet hopes! oh, far more blest
 My bosom had it never known
 Your presence, since in vain possess,
 To lose you while you seemed my own."

RODRIGUEZ LOBO.

He rapidly learned that the court-martial was in the garrison orders to assemble on the 5th instant, and that charges of the most serious nature, involving, perhaps, the terrible penalty of—death, were to be brought against him! What sudden mystery—what inexplicable horror was this?

On the night he entered Alva he was relieved from the humiliation of an armed escort or guard by the influence of Askern and Warriston, who both bound themselves by their parole of honour for his appearance whenever required. He was thus at liberty to go about the town, but he cared not to avail himself of it, and remained in his quarters.

The evening of the 4th of December was dull and gloomy. Setting amid saffron haze and shorn of all his beams, the lurid sun looming large and crimson like a wondrous globe, shed a steady light along the waters of the Tormes, a deep stream, which there rolls under a high and ancient bridge, that was afterwards blown up when the British retreated from Burgos. An old Moorish wall surrounds Alva, which stands on the slope of a hill, and there above its flat-terraced mansions, rises the great palace of the powerful Dukes of Alva and Berwick, where Ferdinand Alvarez of Toledo, the terror of the Low Countries and the institutor of "the Court of Blood," first saw the light. In an angle of the Moorish rampart, then crumbling in ruins, stands a high round tower of considerable strength and antiquity. Herein was posted the quarter-guard of the 1st Brigade, and in an upper chamber Quentin had his billet, and there he sat alone, after the day's march, left to his own reflections, and these were mournful and gloomy enough. The aspect of this chamber was

little calculated to raise his drooping spirit. Almost destitute of furniture, it was built of massive stone, vaulted, and had three narrow windows, the sides of which were covered with elaborate zigzag Moorish ornaments, arabesques, and uncouth inscriptions, which, though he knew it not, were texts and quotations from the Koran in Arabic. One of these windows opened to the hill on the slope of which stands Alva, and afforded a view of its tiled and terraced roofs. Another faced the mountains of Leon, and the third showed the narrow gorge through which the red and swollen Tormes lay rolling under the bridge; beyond which, on an eminence, were posted a brigade of field guns and a cavalry picquet; the horses were linked together, and the troops cloaked. All looked wet and dreary, dull and mournful, and as the December sun went down beyond the dark and purple hills, the pipers of the 92nd played "Lochaber no more," their evening retreat, and this air, so slow and wailing, as they marched along the old Moorish wall, affected Quentin so deeply that he covered his face with his hands and wept.

What would that fine old soldier, courtier, and cavalier, the mirror of old-fashioned courage and honour, Lord Rohallion, say or think, when he heard of his disgrace? What would Lady Winifred—what the old quartermaster, John Girvan? and what would the emotions of Flora Warrender be? Whether the charges against him were false or true—proved or refuted—she at least would be lost to him for ever, for his career was closed ere it was well begun, and he felt that no other road in life lay open to him. He felt too, instinctively, that Baltasar de Saldos and his sister Donna Isidora were in some manner the secret source of the present evil turn in his fortune; but how or in what fashion he was yet to learn. The phrase, that the charges involved death or such *other* punishment as a court-martial might award, was ever before him. The vagueness of the latter recourse, rather than the terror of the first, cut him to the heart, as all the penalties inflicted by such a court are severe and disgraceful. Cosmo, he heard, had suggested that he should be handed over to the tender mercies of the Spanish civil authorities; but Sir John Hope insisted that the charges were such as only a military court could take cognizance of; so what on earth were they? Unconscious alike of a mistake or crime, oh, how he longed for the time of trial! As the darkness of the sombre eve crept on, its gloom was singularly in unison with his own sombre thoughts. Bright visions had faded away and airy bubbles burst. Chateaux en Espagne were no longer tenable now! How many gorgeous day-dreams of glory and honour, of rank and fame, of position in society attained by worth and merit,

were now dissolved in air! His naturally warm, generous, and kindly heart had become seared, callous, and misanthropical. Experience and the world had tried their worst upon him, and thus, for a time, a mere boy in years became a bitter-hearted man, for a day dawn of a glorious ambition seemed to be sinking prematurely into a black and stormy night. He had seen so many new places and met such a variety of strangers; he had been involved in so many episodes, and had experienced so much by land and sea, and, within a very few months, so much seemed to have happened, that a dreamy dubiety appeared to obscure the past; and thus his former monotonous existence at Rohallion—monotonous as compared with the stir of war—came only at times with clearness, as it were in gleams and flashes of thought and memory. He had nothing tangible about him—not even a lock of Flora's hair—to convince him of past realities, or that he had ever been elsewhere than with the 25th; and yet out of this chaos Flora's face and figure, her eyes and expression of feature, her identity, stood strongly forth. Oh! there was neither obscurity nor indistinctness there! And now, amid his sorrow, he felt a keen longing to write to her, under cover to John Girvan; but then, he reflected, was such a course honourable in him or deserved by Lord and Lady Rohallion, who hoped to hail her one day as their daughter-in-law? And what mattered her regard for him now—now, with the heavy doom of a court-martial hanging over his head! And yet, if even death were to be his fate, he felt that he would die all the more happily with the knowledge and surety that Flora still loved him. Deep, deep indeed were his occasional burst of bitterness at Cosmo; but when he remembered that Cosmo's mother had also been a mother to himself—when all the memory of her love for him, her early kindness, her caresses, her kisses on his infant brow, her increasing tenderness—came rushing back upon him, his heart flew to his head, and Quentin felt that even yet he could almost forgive all the studied wrong and injustice the narrow spirit and furious jealousy of her son now made him suffer. But how were the members of the regiment or of the division to understand all this!

Amid the reverie in which he had been indulging in the dark, the door of the upper chamber of the old tower opened, and two officers, in long regimental cloaks, entered, accompanied by a soldier with a parcel.

"Well, Quentin, old fellow—how goes it?" said Monkton's cheerful voice.

"Cheer up, my boy," added Askerne; "before this time to-morrow we shall have known the worst, and it will be past.

We have brought you a bottle of capital wine. It is a present from Ramon Campillo, the jolly muleteer, who came in after the division, and leaves again, for the French lines, I fear."

"A sly dog, who butters his bread on both sides, likely," said Monkton; "my man has brought you a fowl and a loaf, so we shall make a little supper together."

"Here, boy, drink," said Askerne, when the soldier lighted a candle, and they all looked with commiseration upon Quentin's pale cheek and bloodshot eyes; "I insist upon it—you seem ill and weary."

He could perceive that both Askerne and Monkton looked grave, earnest, and anxious, for they knew more of the charges against him than they cared to tell.

"At what hour does the court assemble to-morrow?" he asked.

"Ten, Kennedy."

"Who is the president?"

"Colonel Colquhoun Grant, of the King's Light Dragoons—a hussar corps."

"Where does it meet?" asked Quentin, wearily.

"In one of the rooms of the Alva Palace. Now we cannot stay above ten minutes, Quentin. We are both in orders for the court, and this visit, if known, might cost us our commissions, perhaps; but I know Monkton's servant to be a sure fellow."

"Sure, sir," repeated the soldier, "I should think so! It was to *my* poor wife and child that Mr. Kennedy—the Lord reward him for it!—gave his blanket on the night we bivouacked at the Escorial," added the man, in a broken voice; "the night I lost them both—never to see them again."

Askerne now asked Quentin many questions concerning his recent wanderings; the answers to some of these he jotted down in his note-book; and he gave much good advice for his guidance on the morrow, adding, with a sigh of annoyance, that he feared there was a deep scheme formed against him, and that, as several outrages had been committed by our retreating troops, it was not improbable that he might be sacrificed to soothe the ruffled feelings of the Spaniards.

"What leads you to think so?" asked Quentin.

"This subpoena, which Monkton's servant picked up in a wine-house and brought us," replied Askerne, opening a letter and reading it, as follows;

"Head-quarters, Alva-de-Tormes,
December 4th.

"SENOR PADRE,—A general court-martial having been appointed to be held here, for the trial of Mr. Quentin Kennedy, serving with the 25th Regiment, upon sundry charges exhibited

against him; and the said Mr. Kennedy having represented that your testimony will be very material in the investigation of some of the articles of charge, and having requested that you may be officially summoned as a witness, I am to desire you, and you are hereby required, to give your attendance here to-morrow, at ten o'clock in the morning, at which time it is conceived your evidence will become necessary.

"I have the honour to be, &c., &c.,

LLOYD CONYERS, Staff Captain,

"Deputy Judge Advocate.

"El Senor Padre Trevino."

"This is some trickery!" exclaimed Quentin; "Trevino is the ruffian of whom I have spoken more than once; the man's doubly my enemy. Well, well! save myself, it matters little to any one what becomes of me," he added bitterly. "I have no kindred—not a relation that I know of in the wide world, and save yourselves, no friends now to regret me or to remember me, save *one* of whom I cannot speak. It is thus better as it is."

"How?" asked Askerne, who grasped him firmly by the hand.

"For if this false accusation, whatever it is, be proved against me, then none shall blush for my dishonour or sorrow for my fall. Fools may laugh and the wicked may jeer, but the death volley will close up my ears for ever. It may do more," he added, in a broken voice; "it may be the means of revealing to me who was my mother, who my father, with the great secret of eternity after all; so, my dear Askerne, I am, you see, reckless of the future."

"Damme, Quentin, this will never do——" Monkton was beginning, when Askerne spoke.

"In this mingled mood of sullenless and resignation you will destroy all chance of defeating the machinations of your enemy, for such I—I—consider our colonel to be," said the captain of grenadiers, after a pause. "Buckle and I will prepare your declaration for to-morrow, and it shall be sent to you for revision and emendation soon after reveille; but you must take courage—I insist upon it, for your own sake!"

"I do not lack it," replied Quentin, firmly.

"By courage, I do not mean an indifference that is the result of misanthropy, or a boldness that is gathered from despair. At your years, Quentin, either were unnatural," said Askerne, kindly.

"My brave lad," said Monkton, putting an arm round him as an elder brother might have done, "have you really no fear of—of death?"

"To say that I have not," replied Quentin, with quivering lip,

"would be to state that which is false ; but I know death to be an ordinance of God—the fate of all mankind. It is but the end of the course of time—welcome only to such as are weary of their lives. I am not weary of mine, therefore I would indeed find it hard to die. I have always known that I must die, but never considered where or how—how near or how distant the day of doom might be : but I do shrink with horror at the contemplation of dying with a disgrace upon me—a stigma which, though I am innocent, time may never remove."

"I fear that we are but poor comforters, and that you are taking the very blackest view of matters," said Askerne ; "but be advised by me, and take courage—a resolute and modest bearing always wins respect. In the court to-morrow are friends who will not see you wronged, for every member there is alike a judge and a jurymen. Put your trust in Heaven and in your own innocence ; sleep well if you can——"

"And be sure to take something by way of breakfast—a broiled bone and a glass of Valdepenas—you have a long and anxious day before you."

"And so, till we meet again, good night—God bless you, my hearty."

They shook him warmly by the hand, and retired.

He heard their footsteps descending the stone steps of the old tower (erst trod by the feet of many a turbaned Moor and steel-clad Crusader), and then dying away in distance : but soothed and relieved in mind by a visit performed at such risk by his friends, and hoping much—he knew not what—from the notes made by Rowland Askerne, Quentin lay down on his pallet and strove to sleep, amid a silence broken only by the beating of his own heart, and the rush of the Tormes in its deep and rocky bed.

"*They* at least believe in me, and will not desert me !" he repeated to himself again and again.

But the brave boyish spirit and hope—the enthusiastic desire to achieve something great and good, no matter what, by land or sea, by flood or field—a glorious deed that present men should vaunt, and those of future times would speak of—where were that hope and spirit *now* ?

CHAPTER LXV.

THE COURT-MARTIAL.

"Self-reverence, self-knowledge, self-control,
These three alone lead life to sovereign power.
Yet not for power, (power of herself
Would come uncall'd for,) but to live by law,
Acting the law we live by without fear;
And because right is right, to follow right
Were wisdom in the scorn of consequence."—TENNYSON.

THE court-martial assembled in a large and magnificent apartment of the Alva palace or castle, which stands in the centre of the town. It is in a good state of preservation, and the chamber usually occupied by the terrible duke, with all its ancient furniture, still remains there in its original state. On the walls of the great apartment selected for the court hung the armour of the successive princes of the house of Toledo from a very remote period—indeed, from the mail shirts that had resisted the Moorish scimitars down to the steel caps and jacks of the war of the Spanish succession; and many of the breast-plates were emblazoned with the armorial bearings and trophies of those warlike dukes who boast of their descent from the Paleologi Emperors of the East, and who were first ennobled as peers of Leon by Alphonso VI., or the Brave, of Castile, in 1085.

As Quentin approached the great embattled door of this stately mansion, many soldiers of the regiment were crowding about it, and all these muttered their good wishes; many a honest hand was held out to him, and many a forage-cap waved in silence, evincing emotions of good-will that stirred his heart with gratitude; and gave him new courage as he entered the court, attended by the provost-marshal. He certainly looked wan and ill; traces yet remained of his recent illness at the Villa de Maciera; to these were added anxiety, lack of proper food and sleep, with the toil and exposure incident to the campaign, all of which served to give him interest in the eyes of many, for the court was crowded by officers of nearly every regiment in the division, and a few Spanish citizens and priests of Alva. His young face appeared sorrow-struck in feature, and many read there, in the thoughtful brow, the quivering lip, and the sad but restless eye, indications of a proud but suffering spirit. Save these, and an occasional unconscious twitching of the hands, Quentin, though awed by the presence, and the hapless and novel predicament in which he found himself, was calm and collected in appearance.

He was simply clad in his unlaced and plain red coat, without a belt or accoutrement of any kind, to indicate that he was a prisoner; and he was accommodated with a chair and separate table, on which lay writing materials, but these he had not the slightest intention of using.

At the head of a long table of formidable aspect, whereon lay a Bible and the "Articles of War," and which was littered with pens, paper, letters, &c., sat the president of the court, Colonel Colquhoun Grant, in the gorgeous uniform of the 15th Hussars, blue faced with red, and the breast a mass of silver embroidery that might have turned a sword-cut. He wore the Order of Merit, given to every officer of his regiment by the Emperor of Germany fourteen years before, for their unexampled bravery in the affair of Villiers en Couche, a name still borne on the standard of the Hussars. The other members, fourteen in number, belonged to different regiments; but Quentin was truly glad to see among them the familiar faces of Askerne and two other captains of the Borderers. All were in full uniform, and were seated on the right and left of the president, according to their seniority in the army; Captain Conyers, acting as judge-advocate, being placed at the foot of the court, which, by the showy uniform, large epaulettes of silver or gold, the crimson sashes, and, in four instances, tartan plaids, of the members, had a very rich and striking appearance as the morning sunshine streamed along the stately room through six lofty and latticed windows. A considerable bustle and treading of feet announced the entrance of the various witnesses, among whom Quentin recognised the tall figure of the Master of Rohallion, the sturdy paunch of worthy Major Middleton, the sun-burned faces of Buckle and others of the Borderers-together with a Dominican monk, in whom, notwithstanding his freshly-shaven chin, long robe, and knotted girdle, he recognised with astonishment, Trevino! Other guerillas were present, but, the most prominent was Don Baltasar. The handsome but sallow visage of the latter was pale nearly as that of a corpse; his bloodless lips and white glistening teeth appeared ghastly beneath the enormous moustaches that were twisted savagely up to each ear. His nostrils were contracting and dilating with wild, mad passion, and it was evident that nothing but the presence he stood in prevented him from rushing, sword in hand, on Quentin, and ending, there and then, the proceedings of the court and our story by immolating him on the spot.

Quite undeterred by his formidable aspect or excitement, some of the younger officers were seen to quiz Baltasar, whose costume, an embroidered black velvet jacket, with a pair of British flank-

company wings, and other accessories, was sufficiently mock-heroic, fanciful, and absurd.

"Who acts as the prisoner's counsel or friend?" asked Colonel Grant, the president.

"I—Captain Warriston, 94th—Scots Brigade," said the full mellow voice of that officer, as he entered, fully accoutred with sword, sash, and gorget, and took his seat at the little table beside Quentin Kennedy, who, at the moment, felt his heart very full indeed.

Captain Conyers now read the order for assembling the court, and then the members, each with his ungloved right hand placed upon the open Bible, were sworn the usual oath, "to administer justice according to the rules and articles for the better government of his Majesty's forces, &c., without partiality, favour, or affection, &c.; and further, not to divulge the sentence of the court until approved of, or the vote or opinion of any member thereof, unless required to do so by a court of law."

This formula over, the judge advocate desired Quentin to stand while the charges against him were read; and to his utter bewilderment they ran thus, briefly, as we omit many dates and repetitions:—

"Mr. Quentin Kennedy, volunteer, serving with his Majesty's 25th Foot, accused in the following instances of conduct unbecoming a gentleman and soldier:

First; of rescuing by the strong hand a French officer and lawful prisoner of war from Don Baltasar de Saldos, in direct violation of the 51st clause of the 2nd section of the 'Articles of War.'

Second; of giving the rescued prisoner such intelligence as enabled the enemy, then cantoned in Valencia de Alcantara, to anticipate, by a combined attack, the junction about to be formed by the guerilla force of Don Baltasar with the division of the allied army under Lieutenant-General Sir John Hope, and thus causing the loss of five field-guns and many Spanish subjects.

Third; of snaring away from the cantonment at Herrerueta the sister of Don Baltasar de Saldos, who has not since been heard of, her fate being thus involved in mystery, or worse, and thereby the prisoner contravened the order issued by Sir John Moore, urging the conciliation of the Spanish people on the army entering Castile.

Fourth; of assaulting in the town of Merida, to the effusion of blood, the Reverend Padre Trevino, lately a Dominican monk of Salamanca, and now chaplain to Don Baltasar de Saldos, in direct contravention of the 37th clause of the 2nd section of the 'Articles of War,' concerning any officer or soldier 'who shall

offer violence to a chaplain of the army or to *any other minister of God's word.*

"*Fifth* ; of plundering an inhabitant to the extent of at least eighty gold moidores, part of which were found in his baggage, and part given to the paymaster of his Majesty's 25th Foot for transmission home.

"*Sixth* ; for refusing or declining to take another despatch to Don Bakasar, from Montijo, and thereby showing a complicity with the enemy and dread of detection by the loyal party in Spain."

So ended this farrago of words.

Aware that sooner or later the proceedings of the court-martial (which we can assure the reader made some noise at the time) would be read at Rohallion, Colonel Crawford had all the charges framed in the name of the general of division.

"Oh, Cosmo !" thought Quentin, "you aim not only at my life, but at my honour !"

"Well, 'pon my soul," thought the Master, after he heard the list of charges read, "if the fellow gets over *all* these, I'll say that, with a fair match, and equally weighted, he might run a race with the devil himself !"

Quentin pleaded *not guilty*.

The court was then cleared of the witnesses and the proceedings commenced.

With the regular detail of these we have no intention of afflicting the reader ; suffice it, that the solemn and dreary writing down of every question and answer so lengthened them out that they became a source of irritation and agony to one whose temperament was so sharp and impetuous as that of Quentin Kennedy, burning as he was with indignation at accusations so false and so unmerited, and some of which he had a difficulty in refuting ; and, we regret to add, that the form of procedure was then, as it is still, old-fashioned, cumbrous, loose, and tedious.

There was no regular legal counsel for the prisoner or for the prosecution either ; no cross-examination, save such as might emanate from some unusually sharp fellow, who kept himself awake, and affected to take notes, when in reality he was caricaturing Middleton's pigtail, Smith's paunch, and Brown's nose.

The witnesses were sometimes examined pell-mell, just as their names stood on the list ; their evidence, however, being carefully written down, to the end that it might be read over to them for after-thought or revision before the opinions of the court, as to guilt and sentence, were asked ; a formula that always begins with the *junior* member, the president having the casting vote.

Such was then, as it is now, the somewhat rambling, free and

easy tenor of a general court-martial ; yet, with all its idiosyncrasies, it is ever a just and honourable tribunal, and such as no true soldier would ever wish to change for a civil one. Every member sworn is bound to give an opinion. In the French service a military offence can be tried after the lapse of ten years; with us, the period is three.

Warriston objected to the competency of the court ; but the president over-ruled his objection by stating that a Volunteer of the Line, like every other camp-follower, was amenable to the "Articles of War."

The transmission of the despatch to Don Baltasar was easily proved by Cosmo and others, and by the reply, which lay on the table.

Though handsome and soldierly in aspect and bearing, the Master of Rohallion could scarcely conceal a very decided *animus* in delivering his evidence. Brave and proud, he was yet weak enough and small enough in mind to *hate* Quentin Kennedy with that species of animosity which is always the most bitter, because it arises from a *sense* of unmerited wrong done to the weaker victim.

In answer to a question by the president :

"Of the prisoner's antecedents," said he, "I know very little—little at least that is good or honourable."

"Colonel Crawford, you will be so good as to explain."

"He was received as an orphan, an outcast, I believe, into the house of my father, General Lord Rohallion, when I was serving with the Brigade of Guards. That house he deserted ungratefully and disappeared for a time, no trace of him being discovered but a silver-mounted walking-stick, which I knew to be his, and which was found beside a murdered man, a vagrant or gipsy, in the vault of an old ruin called Kilhenzie. How it came there, I pretend not to say ; but on searching the vault, whither my pointers led me, I picked up the stick, with marks of blood upon it, some days after the body had been taken away."

On hearing this cruel and artful speech, which contained so much of reality, Quentin almost started from his chair, his eyes flashing and his pale nether lip quivering with rage ; but Warriston held him forcibly back.

"Prisoner," said the president, "do you know a place in Scotland called the castle of Kilhenzie?"

"I do not understand the meaning of this question," said Captain Warriston, rising impetuously, "and to it I object ! It is not precise on the part of the prosecution, and discloses an intention of following up a line of examination of which neither

the prisoner nor his *amici curiæ* have received due notice, and which, moreover, is not stated in the six charges before the court."

After a consultation, Colonel Grant replied :

"The line of examination in this instance, Captain Warriston, is to prove previous character; thus we find it quite relevant to question the prisoner concerning the episode referred to. It may bear very materially on *other* matters before the court. Mr. Kennedy, do you know a place called Kilhenzie?"

"I do, sir," said Quentin, and for a moment there rushed upon his memory recollections of many a happy hour spent there with Flora Warrender.

"Are you aware of any remarkable circumstance occurring there in which you were an actor?"

Poor Quentin's pallor now gave way to a flush of shame and honest anger; but he replied—

"Driven into the ruin by a torrent of rain, I found a dead body lying there among the straw; it filled me with alarm and dismay, so I hastened from the place."

"Leaving behind you a walking-stick?"

"Yes, sir; it would appear so."

"Covered with blood."

"Most likely," said Quentin, remembering the wound he had received from Cosmo's hand.

"All this, Colonel Grant, has nothing to do with the case," urged Warriston, firmly.

"It seems to cast grave doubts on the previous character and antecedents of the prisoner."

"It seems also to show the peculiar vindictiveness of the prosecution."

"You are unwise, Captain Warriston," said the president, severely.

"I am here as the friend of the prisoner."

"For what reason did you leave the castle of Rohallion?" asked the court.

Quentin gazed full at the Master with his eyes flashing so dangerously that this personage, fearing he might be driven to say something which might bring ridicule on him—though Quentin would rather have died than uttered Flora's name there—begged that the first charge might be proceeded with.

Sworn across two drawn swords in the Spanish fashion, Baltasar, Trevino, and other guerillas, inspired by spite and hostility, related in succession how Quentin had rescued the French prisoner; how he had undertaken to conduct Donna Isidora in safety to Portalegre, a mere day's ride: but had made away

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with her, on the road, in some manner unknown, as well as with a horse and mule, the property of her brother.

"A singular duenna to have charge of a young Spanish beauty—eh, Carysfort?" he heard a hussar say.

"By Jove, Villars, I wish it had been my luck—that's all," was the laughing reply.

Quentin wished the same with all his heart.

Then came details of the attack made on the guerillas by Ribeaupierre's cavalry brigade. The charge of giving intelligence to the enemy was based on bare assumption, and was unsupported by a tittle of evidence. Next followed the Padre Trevino, costumed for the occasion, a rare example of a wolf in sheep's clothing, who showed his wounded caput, and told the sorrowful story of his maltreatment at the aqueduct of Merida, whither he had gone to pray in solitude. The assault was proved beyond a doubt by the evidence of a certain Martin Sedillo, an ill-looking dog with one eye, formerly an alguazil of Salamanca and now a guerilla, who swore distinctly that he saw Quentin beat the padre down with the butt-end of his musket.

"You distinctly saw him strike the padre down?" repeated Colonel Grant.

"Si, senor presidente y senores oficiales," said the guerilla, bowing low.

"Wantonly?"

"Most wantonly, senores."

"Retire. Call the next witness on the list—private Allan Grange, 25th Foot."

To the Borderer, on his entrance, the previous questions were repeated by the court.

"Yes, sir—I saw Mr. Kennedy strike down the guerilla (who was not then habited like a friar) with his clubbed musket, but only in time to save his life from *this dagger*, which I took from the hand of his reverence."

As he spoke, Allan Grange handed a knife of very ugly aspect to the president, who saw the name *Trevino* burned, by a hot iron, on the haft.

"Allan Grange, were you ever tried by a court-martial?" asked the judge advocate, looking among his memoranda for one furnished by Colonel Crawford.

"Yes, sir," faltered the soldier, growing red and pale by turns.

"And were reduced to the ranks, at Colchester?"

"Yes, sir," he replied, sadly.

"And you were sentenced to be flogged—three hundred lashes, I think, by the Defaulters' Book?"

"A sentence kindly remitted by Major Middleton," said Grange, proudly.

"There, this will do—you may go," said Colonel Grant; and then some of the members smiled and looked at each other, as much as to say, "we see how much *your* evidence is worth."

Quentin knew that Donna Isidora was in the French camp; but when Warriston mentioned this to be the case, the only witness called to prove it, Lieutenant Monkton, was unable to repeat what Ribeaupierre said, as he had been beyond hearing at that particular moment.

On the fifth charge, concerning the gold moidores, Quentin thought himself bewitched when the one-eyed guerilla, Martin Sedillo, deliberately swore, with the drawn swords of two officers crossed under his bearded chin, "that he was plundered of them at Herreruella by the prisoner, whom he was ready to warrant as false as Galalon!"

"Who was he?" inquired Askerne, looking at his watch impatiently for the third time.

"Galalon betrayed the French army at Roncesvalles," said Colonel Grant; "as we say in Scotland, false as Menteith. It is a local phrase."

His refusal to bear another despatch to De Saldos was easily proved, and that circumstance seemed to corroborate much that had preceded it.

Matters were now looking gloomy indeed. Quentin became sick at heart; he drained his water-jug, yet his lips grew parched and dry; he felt the toils closing around him, and already, in fancy, he heard the president passing the terrible sentence of death!

The bitter conviction came home to his soul, that hate and wiles, against which it was in vain for innocence to contend, were triumphing over him; and that even if pardoned, the memory that he had been arraigned, and on *such* cruel charges, would live!

Shame for unmerited reproach and unavailing sorrow for a lost youth—a blighted, it might be, a long life taken away, and perhaps by a shameful death—were some of the deep, the bitter, and stinging emotions felt on this day by poor Quentin Kennedy.

While that court-martial lasted he lived a lifetime in every hour of it!

His declaration or defence, read by Warriston, was simply a recapitulation of some of the leading features of our narrative, which he had no means of substantiating; the mass of evidence against him was summed up, but was too strong in some points

to be easily disposed of. His youth and inexperience were dwelt upon, but it seemed without much avail. Neither did the warm manner in which Major Middleton, Buckle, Serjeant-major Calder and others, bore testimony to his spotless character, seem to find much weight. To satisfy the Spaniards, a victim was wanted, and here was one ready made to hand.

It was now nearly four o'clock, and the Court was about to be cleared for the consideration of the opinion and sentence, when the sharp and well-known twang of a French cavalry trumpet rang in the court before the palace, and the tramping of horses was heard.

"Thank God!" muttered Askerne, as he exchanged a rapid glance with Monkton; "that muleteer has served us well!"

At that moment of terrible expectation an officer of the 7th Hussars entered hastily, and presented a note to the judge advocate.

"What interruption is this, Captain Conyers?" asked Colonel Grant, sternly.

"An officer from the French lines, come in under a flag of truce, requests to be examined by the Court for the defence," replied Conyers.

Every face present expressed extreme astonishment.

"What is his name?" asked the president.

"Eugène de Ribeaupierre—sous-lieutenant of the 24th Chasseurs à Cheval," said Conyers, consulting an embossed calling-card.

"Is it he whose name occurs so frequently in the declaration of the prisoner?"

"Most probably, sir."

"Admit him."

The clank of a sabre and the jingle of steel spurs were heard, and then Eugène de Ribeaupierre, looking handsome and gay, entered, helmet in hand, and bowed low to the Court, and all who were present.

"Ha, mon ami!" said he, shaking Quentin's hand with warmth, "I am come in time, I hope; the proceedings are not yet closed, monsieur?" he asked anxiously of the president.

"No—but how did *you* come to hear of them?" was the suspicious question.

"From Ramon Campillo, a muleteer of Miranda del Ebro; the same person who conveyed M. Kennedy from the Villa de Maciera to Portalegre, and who was passing through our camp this morning. He came expressly to my tent to tell me all about it, and that charges were to be made which I alone could refute. I reported the affair to my father, the General, who

generously gave me leave to come here, with an escort—so I have come, messieurs, to be sworn and examined.”

“Askerne,” whispered Monkton, “you are a rare fellow!”

“How, Willie?”

“Damme, by your foresight we shall yet baffle Crawford, De Saldos, Trevino and Co.!”

“Hush, hush! You are rash.”

It is almost needless to describe how the young French officer, after being duly sworn by the judge advocate, corroborated in every particular the statement made in Quentin's declaration—statements of which he could have had no previous cognizance, save as an actor in the episodes referred to. He described how Quentin had saved his life from a deliberate attempt at assassination on the part of De Saldos, and became strongly excited on referring to the infamous massacre of the prisoners by Trevino. He asserted that the moidores were taken by himself from the holsters of Raoul, a dead corporal of his troop, who found them amid the plunder of Coimbra. He asserted, on his oath and honour as an officer and chevalier of the Legion of Honour, that the movement made by the troops of his father, collaterally with those of General Hope and the guerillas of Baltasar, was *not* consequent on any information given him by the prisoner, but had been resolved on long before, as a printed order of the emperor, which he had the honour to lay on the table, would amply testify!

As for Donna Isidora, he freely and laughingly acknowledged that he had carried her away from the villa, and that she was now Madame de Marbœuf, wife of his friend Jules de Marbœuf, colonel of the 24th, as the Padre Florez, who, ignorant of that auspicious event, had come to effect her release from the French camp, could now substantiate, as he was now without the court, and ready to appear.

The long, thin figure of the padre, wearing his flowing soutan and shovel hat, next appeared to corroborate all this, and also to state the sickly condition in which he handed over Quentin to the muleteers at the Villo de Maciera.

“Every link is thus supplied beyond a doubt!” exclaimed Colonel Grant.

Quentin was acquitted amid a burst of applause that found an echo in the hearty hurrah given by the King's Own Borderers in the palace square without.

“And now, monsieur,” said Ribeaupierre, presenting Quentin with a valuable diamond ring, “accept this as a present from madame my mother, who drew it from her finger as I left the camp, with the request that you will wear it for her sake, and in

memory of the day on which you saved my life from that barbarous Spaniard among the mountains of Herrerucla."

Within an hour after rendering service so valuable, and indeed so priceless, the gallant and generous Ribeaupierre had mounted and ridden from Alva de Tormes, attended by a strong escort, in front of which rode a Polish lancer, with a white handkerchief in token of truce streaming from the head of his lance; and so ended—like a dream to Quentin—this episode, this chivalric intervention, which was dictated by a noble spirit worthy of the knightly days of the Chevalier Bayard, or of Bertrand du Guesclin.

CHAPTER LXVI.

LOVE ME.

"You do return me back on memory's path
To dear remembered scenes. Old Scotland's scenes!
It is a glorious land! I long to roam,
Doubly a lover, 'mong its wildest charms;
Its glens, its rocky coast, its towering cliffs
Come o'er me like a dream of infancy,
Startling the soul to momentary rapture;
It is the voice of home!"—DANIEL.

Two or three days passed before Quentin quite recovered his equanimity, or felt assured of his safety, and then as the whole affair of the court-martial seemed like a night-mare, he might have deemed it all a dream, but for the occasional comments and congratulations of his friends, and for the splendid gift of Madame de Ribeaupierre, which he prized greatly for its whole history, and which he longed greatly to place on one of Flora Warrender's tiny fingers.

Three days after the sitting of the court, tidings came to Alva that Baltasar de Saldos and his guerilla force had suffered a sharp repulse with great loss by the French, whose post at Fonteveras they had attacked with unexampled fury and blind rashness—both perhaps inspired by Donna Isidora's defection from her country's cause—and that in the confused retreat upon Hope's picquets, the luckless Baltasar had been shot dead by one of the Westphalian Light Horse.

We are not ashamed to say that Quentin on hearing this from Major Middleton, felt a species of relief, self-preservation being one of the first laws of nature, and he never could have felt himself perfectly safe in Spain while Baltasar de Saldos trod its soil.

Reflection on all the past served but to embitter the disgust and wrath with which he viewed the bearing of Cosmo Crawford at the recent trial, and the terrible and hopeless malevolence he exhibited in reference to the episode at Kilhenzie, an affair which there was some difficulty in explaining, without referring to other and irrelevant matters; so Quentin burned with impatient eagerness for a general engagement with the French, for anything that would serve to blot out the recollection of his late unmerited humiliation; but he never thought of the enemy now without the face, figure, and voice of his friend Ribeaupierre rising up-braidingly before him.

Cosmo could have dismissed Quentin from the regiment, with or without cause, a colonel being himself sole judge of the expediency of so getting rid of a volunteer; but he was ashamed that his own family should hear of an act so petty. The onus of the futile court-martial fell on the general of division, and there were many chances against Quentin ever relating its secret history at Rohallion, as ere long bullets would be flying thick as winter hail.

Amid that confidence which is inspired by a borrachio-skin of good Valdepenas, varied by stiff brandy-and-water, Quentin, so far as he deemed necessary or right, made "a clean breast of it" to his friends and comrades, and detailed anew his adventures on the road from Herrerueta and at the Villa de Maciera. Though he was complimented by Warriston and Askerne, whose praise was of value, there were not a few, such as Monkton, Colville, Ensigns Colyear, Boyle and others, who laughed immoderately, and voted him "a downright spoon"—wishing "such jolly good-luck had been theirs as to have a dazzling Castilian chucking herself at their heads."

"Yes, damme," said Monkton, "I should have had another story to tell; though, certainly, Kennedy, your *Dulcinea* did not 'let concealment like a worm' i the bud"—how does the quotation end? Now, Pimple, are you going to keep that blessed borrachio-skin all night? Why, man, you have squeezed it till it has become like a half-empty bagpipe."

Elsewhere we have mentioned that, after reading the famous newspaper paragraph which made such a commotion among the secluded household at Rohallion, the quartermaster offered to write to Quentin, and that Flora gave him a tiny note to enclose in his letter. So it was on this night, when returning from Monkton's billet to his own, with a head none of the clearest, after talking a vast deal, smoking cigars and drinking the country wine, that Quentin was startled—completely sobered, in fact—by his servant placing in his hand a letter, and saying

briefly that "the mail had come up that evening from the rear," which meant from Lisbon. This letter was covered by such a multitude of post-marks that some time elapsed before Quentin could bring himself to examine the contents; nor, in his mute astonishment, did he do so, until he had fully deciphered the address, which was in old John Girvan's hand, and the seal, an antiquated button of the 25th Foot, with the number, of course, reversed. Every word seemed like *a voice from home*, and all the past—faces, forms, scenes, and places, came like a living and moving panorama on his memory. Then, almost giddy with delight, a heart tremulous with anxiety, and eyes that grew moist—so moist, indeed, that for some seconds he could see no more than that the letter was dated more than a month back, Quentin was striving to read the square, old-fashioned writing of his early friend, when something dropped from between the pages—a tiny note, sealed by blue wax—the crest a hare *sejant*, the cognisance of the Warrenders. Excited anew, he opened this with extreme care but tremulous haste. It was a single sheet of note-paper, on which two words were written, in a hand he knew right well—*From Flora*—and in it was a valuable ring, studded with precious stones.

We are compelled to admit that Quentin kissed the words and the ring some dozen times or so before he put the paper containing the former next his heart, in the most approved manner of all lovers, and the circlet on his finger, where he continued to admire it from time to time, while deciphering the long and somewhat prosy, but kind letter of his worthy old friend, who evidently knew nothing about the unlucky court-martial being on the tapis when he wrote it, Lord Rohallion's startling reply from the Horse Guards not having then arrived.

"MY DEAR QUENTIN,—And so by God's providence, through the humble medium of a stray newspaper, we have found you at last! Ye rash and ungrateful callant, to leave us all in such a fashion, and well-nigh unto demented lest you had come to skaith or evil. I'll never forget the night the news first came to Rohallion that you had been found. You mind o' my auld Flanders greybeard—the Roman amphora, as the dominie calls it—he and I, wi' Spillsby and auld Jack Andrews, emptied it to the last drop, drinking your health, pouring forth libations in your honour, as Symon Skail hath it, and singing 'Should auld acquaintance be forgot' as we have never sung it since Robbie Burns left Mossiel.

"And so, Quentin, my lad, ye have gone forth even as I went, nigh half a century ago, and have joined the glorious old 25th too! The Lord's blessing be on the old number, wherever it be

—even on the head of a beer barrel! I joined the Borderers with little more than my father's benediction on my head, and, what served me better, one of my mother's pease-bannocks in my pouch. After Minden I came home a corporal, and proud I am to say, that I was the poor wayworn soldier-lad whom Burns saw passing the inn at Brownhill, and whom he invited to share his supper on the night he wrote his song—

‘When wild war’s deadly blast had blawn.’

But ere long, by putting my trust in Providence (and a gude deal in pipeclay), I became, as I am now, and hope you one day shall be, a commissioned officer!

“As for Cosmo the Master, I fear me you’ll find him a harsh and severe colonel. He was aye a dour laddie, and a heartbreak to his mother.

“The Lord and the Lady Rohallion, and a’ body here, down to the running footman, send you their best remembrances. Miss Flora, of Ardgour, writes for herself, and what her note contains is no business of *mine*. Yesterday I caught her looking at the map of Spain in the library, and then she turned to that of Europe.

“‘Girvanmains, it seems only the length of a finger from here to Spain,’ said she, placing a bonnie white hand on the map, ‘and yet it is so far—so *very* far away!’

“She often comes into my snugger and speaks of you, with her eyes and heart full. She has taken your terrier as her peculiar care, and sees that the gamekeeper has your guns always in order, for she looks forward, doubtless, to a time when you will need them again.

“She is as handsome and high-spirited as ever! Young Ferny of Fernwoodlee, dangles pretty closely about her now, and village gossips say they may make a good match, as his lands march with the haughs of Ardgour. If they do, I am sure *you* wont care much about it now, for active service rubs all soft nonsense out of a young fellow’s head, just as his waistbelt rubs his coat bare. (How little the worthy quartermaster, as he blundered on, conceived that he was now sticking pins and needles into poor Quentin by this incidental communication about the young fox-hunting laird of Fernwoodlee!)

“A long war is before us, Quentin, lad, and you’re certain to rise in the service and be spoken about in future times, as Wolfe and Abercrombie are now. Maybe I’ll not live to see the day—but I know that it *will* happen for all that, when the grass is growing green above me in the auld kirkyard up the glen. The dominie—he is sitting opposite me brewing his toddy at this

noment—hopes that you have not fallen into the vile habit of uttering oaths—a habit peculiar to gentlemen of our army ever since it ‘swore so terribly in Flanders.’ He bids me say that ‘from a common custom of swearing, according to Hierocles (some Roman loon, I warrant) men easily slide into falsity; therefore do not use to swear.’ He also hopes that you are not becoming contaminated in those realms of the Pope, who, though he founded all the bishoprics and most of the universities of Christendom, enjoyeth the evil repute of being little better than a Pagan and idolater among us here in Carrick. Moreover, ye are in an especial manner to avoid the snares of the female sex, and remember the mischief that was wrought by a light limmer named Helen of Troy. From myself, dear Quentin, I say avoid all duellists, drunkards, gamblers, and fools; as a good old friend of mine saith in his book, ‘Provide for your soul, and God will provide for your honour. If your name be forgot in the annals of time, it will make a noble figure in the muster-roll of eternity.’ If you are short of the needful, I have still a few more shot in the locker, so fail not to draw on me through Greenwood and Cox, or your paymaster. I would give much, if I had it, to have one glimpse of the old corps again, though no one in it, I suppose, remembers old John Girvan now! Are the bringers-up still dressed from the right flank by a flam on the drum? Does the colonel still use a speaking-trumpet? Is the point of war beaten now in honour of every new commission? Are the sergeants’ pikes still stretchers for the wounded? Are pigtails always dressed straight by the back seam of the coat, and—but Lord! Lord! what am I asking? I clean forget that the service is going to the devil, for the order that abolished the queues will be the ruin of it, from the Horse Guards to the Hottentot battalions! I can’t fancy the 25th, like the Manx cats, with their tails cut off! In my time there would have been open mutiny if the atrocity had been attempted. Even the hair-powder is passing out of fashion now, unless a colonel happens to be powdered by time. Gentlemanly spirit will pass away too, and the cautious time will come when a man will think *twice* before accepting an invitation to *go out* with a brother officer and breathe the morning air, about reveillez, at ten paces, with a pair of saw-handled pops.

“In Rohallion’s time, the 25th used to wear their hair and pigtails so floured and pomatumed that many a good meal the barrack rats have made off our caputs, when we lay asleep on the wood benches of the guard-house. And they (the Horse Guards, we presume) have substituted cloth pantaloons for the pipe-clayed breeches in which we fought at Minden and New York.

This *may* be an improvement, for, in my time, our pipeclayed smalls were often a mass of mud on the march, and in wet weather one might as well have been in a bog of quick lime, for they regularly skinned us. And now, Quentin, my dear, dear laddie, to close an ower lang letter."

To Askerne, who came in at that moment, Quentin showed the letter of the worthy veteran, and it proved to the captain a source of some amusement, so quaint and old-fashioned were Girvan's ideas of the regiment and of the service.

"Well, Kennedy, what does Miss Flora's letter contain—eh?" asked Askerne, with a waggish smile.

"Don't jest, pray—I depend on your honour."

"You may, indeed, Quentin."

"It contained only this ring."

"Oho!" exclaimed Askerne, with a merry laugh, "these stones tell a story, my friend."

"A story!"

"Yes."

"How?"

"Is it possible that you don't know? Read their names; collect the initial letters, and tell me what they make?"

"Lapis-lazuli, opal, verde-antique, emerald, malachite, emerald."

"Well—what are these?"

"LOVE ME!" said Quentin, colouring with pleasure and surprise.

"The language of the stones seems new to you, Kennedy; but you are in luck, my friend. Who is the donor?"

"A dear, dear friend."

"Flora, you say—are you sure it is not Donna Isidora?"

"Impossible—thank Heaven!—a Miss Flora Warrinder."

"Warrender—Warrender—I know that name; is she of Ardgor?"

"The same."

"Her father fell at the head of the Corsican Rangers, in Egypt. I knew him well."

"You will not speak of this before our fellows?" urged Quentin, earnestly.

"Betray confidence! you have my word, Kennedy. And now let me to bed. I am for the baggage-guard; as we are falling back, it starts with the artillery, two hours before the division marches to-morrow."

The ring had now a new interest in Quentin's eyes, and he was never tired of reading the six mystical stones.

"Dearest Flora," he said to himself, "how happy I am now

that not even that lovely Spaniard could for a moment tempt me to forget you!"

For all that, the "lovely Spaniard" was very near doing a vast deal of mischief.

Finding that he was alone, and all was quiet in his billet, he sat far into the hours of the silent night, writing a long letter to his friend the quartermaster—the story of his past adventures; and to Flora he enclosed the only gift he possessed—the ring of Madame de Ribeaupierre—with its remarkable story, and he had barely sealed the envelope when he heard the warning bugle for the baggage-guard to turn out sounding in the dark and silent streets of Alva; and then, with a weary head, he sought his pallet, and without undressing, courted sleep for a couple of hours, before the drums of the division beat the générale.

CHAPTER LXVII.

THE OLD BRIGADIER.

"I cannot deem why men so toil for fame,
A porter is a porter, though his load
Be the oceaned world, and although his road
Be down the ages. What is in a name?
Ah! 'tis our spirit's curse to strive and seek.
Although its heart is rich in pearls and ores,
The sea complains upon a thousand shores;
Sea-like we moan for ever."—ALEXANDER SMITH.

By this time the snows of a bleak and early winter lay deep in the grassy glens and on the heathery hills of Carrick; the mountain burns and rivulets that whilome flowed to the Doon and the Girvan were frozen hard and fast, and, suspended in mid-air, the cascade of the Lollards' Linn hung under its gothic arch like the beard of Father Christmas. Long icicles hung from the eaves of the houses and from the quaint stone gurgoyles of the old square keep. The sound of the woodman's axe echoed in the brown thickets of Ardgour, and everywhere the hedges and trees were being lopped and trimmed by the shears or bill-hook of the gardener and husbandman. In the clear frosty air, from many a mountain loch rang up the cheers of the jovial curlers, and many a hearty fellow anticipated the banquet of salt beef and greens, with steaming whisky toddy, that closed his day's sport, at the Rohallion Arms in Maybole.

The cattle were in their heather-roofed shielings on the sheltered sides of the hills. the dusky smoke of the ruddy winter fire, as-

cended into the clear blue air from many a happy hearth and thatched homestead; but, as the roads were buried deep in snow, news of the distant war in Spain come slowly and uncertainly to such remote dwellings as the castle of Rohallion—how much more uncertainly and slowly to those glens in Sutherland and Ross, where a few heaps of stones amid the desert waste *now* mark the birthplaces of those who manned the ranks of our noblest Scottish regiments in that old and glorious war.

As yet no further tidings had been heard either of Quentin Kennedy or of his court-martial. All that had been heard at home, through the columns of the *London Courier*, was that the slender army of Sir John Moore was falling back before the overwhelming masses of the enemy, and that ere long all might be confusion in its ranks—perhaps dismay!

After the receipt of the Adjutant-General Sir Harry Calvert's letter, the public papers were searched in vain for further tidings of Quentin Kennedy, but none were found. "Our own correspondent," with his camp-gossip, had no place in the newspaper columns of those days. The mails were then often late and always uncertain; many that came by sea were lost between storms and privateers, and the vague anxiety of Quentin's friends gradually became painful suspense, and amid it Lord Rohallion once more *wrote with energy* recommending his young protégé to the duke.

Dinner was over, and the wax-candles had been lighted in the antique yellow drawing-room; Lady Rohallion was engaged, according to her wont, upon some piece of knitting for the poor old folks on the estate; her grey hair, somewhat needlessly powdered, was dressed back as of old. Lord Rohallion had brought his decanter of claret with him into the drawing-room, and there he sat, in a cushioned easy-chair, gazing dreamily into the large fire that blazed in the old-fashioned brass-basket between the delf-lined jambs of the fireplace.

Flora was idling over the piano, practising the "Battle of Prague," the Duke of York's grand march, or some such piece of music then in vogue with young ladies, and near her hovered her present admirer, Jack Ferny of Fernwoodlee, a good-looking but brainless young fellow with sandy hair and a pea-green hunting-coat of the fast kind worn when the Pavilion was in its glory at Brighton. Ferny's estate was a small one, and he was evidently, as gossips said, "doing his best to make ducks and drakes of it." He was strongly addicted to betting, and was a keen fox-hunter and sportsman. Beyond the kennel or the stable he had very few ideas; and so little capability had he of adapting his conversation to time, place, or person, that he was now prosing away to the preoccupied Flora about sporting matters. First

it was of a famous match against time by the noted pedestrian, Captain Barclay of Urie; and next, how, when coursing among the Carrick hills, his two favourite stag-hounds so pressed a hare they had put up yesterday, that she leaped down a precipice more than fifty feet in height, and then the hounds followed without the slightest hesitation.

"Good heavens! they were killed, of course!" said Flora, looking up with wonder.

"Killed, Miss Warrender?—egad, no! To the astonishment of us all, we saw puss and the hounds scouring along the road towards Maybole; but the Ayr stage, coming up with four spanking greys, caused her to make for a field of grass, and though turned five several times by the hounds, she made her escape down a burn at last, for of course they lost the scent."

Finding that Flora had relapsed into listlessness, and that he failed to interest her by his scraps of information on the Newmarket Craven meeting, such as his horse Rolla, eight stone, running against Lord Sackville's Tag, also eight stone, across the flat for a thousand guineas, and that three to one was being taken on Rolla; that the betting was even at Epsom on the brown colt, by Eclipse, out of Mrs. Fitzherbert, and other gossip of similar character, he was compelled to resume his place near the old lord, who was just in the act of pressing him politely to join in another glass of claret, when Jack Andrews limped in with a letter, which the running-footman had at that moment brought from Maybole. The mail from Ayr had broken down near the bank of the Doon in the snow, and the guard had brought on the bags to Dalrymple, on one of the horses, at the risk of his life. Oblong and official, the cover of the letter showed that it was "On His Majesty's service."

"News of Quentin Kennedy, doubtless," said Lord Rohallion, peering about for his eye-glass.

"I pray God it be not unfortunate news about Cosmo!" thought Lady Winifred, for the tidings that came to many a poor mother in those days of war were sad enough sometimes.

Fernwoodlee, who had seen Quentin Kennedy, and knew the rumours concerning him and Flora, observed with annoyance that she was pale and colourless with ill-concealed interest, as she drew near Lord Rohallion, who on opening the missive found that it referred neither to Quentin nor Cosmo, but to *himself*, and was from Sir Harry Calvert, who wrote, that "by the direction of his Royal Highness the Field-Marshal Commanding-in-Chief, he had the pleasure to acquaint him that his lordship's repeated applications and wishes for command of a brigade could now be gratified, and that his name would appear in the next *Gazette*; and that as

troops were being assembled in great force at Shorncliffe camp, his Royal Highness hoped that his lordship would, within a week, be ready to set out for that place, where his services were greatly required, and where his proper staff would be selected."

This announcement fell with a startling effect upon Lord and Lady Rohallion.

"Appointed to a brigade—a brigade for foreign service! My dear Reynold, you cannot for a moment think of accepting this command?" said Lady Winifred, anxiously taking his right hand between her own.

"I applied for it, as you are aware, dearest, repeatedly."

"About the time of the first unhappy expedition to Egypt; but you have long since relinquished all idea of serving again, and now—now, Reynold——"

"I am bound to accept it, Winny," said he. "I am well up the list of major-generals," he added, with a faint smile, "and must do something for promotion. I may be a field-marshal yet, Winny, and a K.G. to boot."

Perhaps in his secret heart he would rather have wished that this command had *not* been offered him; he felt that he was rather old now, and that he had too long settled down into the easy tenor of a quiet country life to care for the hurly-burly and anxiety of leading a brigade—it might ultimately be a division—in the field; but he knew that honour and duty compelled him to accept it. Thus he wrote to the adjutant-general that very night accepting the command, and again urging that something should be done for his young protégé, Quentin Kennedy.

The letter left by the mail next morning, and Lord Rohallion prepared to bid farewell once more to the old mansion of his forefathers, and to buckle on the same sword that he had drawn on the plains of Minden, when a stripling ensign, forty-nine years before.

It was with sad forebodings that Lady Rohallion prepared to break up her quiet and happy household, and bid farewell to friends and neighbours, for she proposed, in the first instance, to accompany her dear old husband to Shorncliffe, and Flora, their ward, who could not be left behind, to the unmistakable dismay of young Fernwoodlee, was to go with them.

She was the only one who felt any pleasure in the anticipated change and long journey by post-horses, as it promised at least all that novelty so charming to a young girl.

Poor Lady Rohallion! She knew that by her husband's frequently expressed desire for military employment he was bound in honour to accept the first command offered him by the Duke of York, his old friend and comrade. She had long feared the

crisis, but, as time passed on and no appointment came, she ceased to think of it; but now it had come at last, and when least expected, and she was about to be subjected to a double separation, from her husband and her son.

Cut off as Britain was then from the continent, the majority of its people had few views or sympathies beyond their own fire-side or immediate circle. The scene of the probable campaign in which Rohallion would serve, was wild and remote, the people desperate and lawless; our force in the field small, when compared with the masses of the dreaded and then abhorred French. She could perceive that her courtly old lord vacillated between sincere sorrow for leaving her and a love for his profession, with a hope of distinguishing himself and trying his strength and skill against some of the famous marshals of the new empire—the heroes of the Italian, German, and Egyptian campaigns—those corporals of *le petit caporal*, who had picked up their epaulettes on the barricades of Paris, or at the foot of the guillotine on which King Louis and the noblest in France died; for thus were the marshal dukes of the great emperor viewed by the high-flying aristocracy of the Pitt administration, in the old fighting days “when George the Third was king.”

Lord Cockburn, in his “Memorials,” describes, with happy fidelity, “a singular race of old Scottish ladies,” that have completely passed away. “They were,” says he, a “delightful set; strong-headed, warm-hearted, and high-spirited; the fire of their tempers not always latent; merry even in solitude; indifferent about the modes and habits of the modern world, and adhering to their own ways, so as to stand out like primitive rocks above ordinary society. Their prominent qualities of sense, humour, affection, and spirit, were embodied in curious outsides, for all dressed, and spoke, and did exactly as they chose; their language, like their habits, entirely Scottish, but without any other vulgarity than what perfect naturalness is sometimes taken for.”

One of that genuine race was the handsome and stately old Lady Winifred of Rohallion.

A Scottish lady of the kindly old school, one who in infancy had been nursed and fondled by warm-hearted and periwigged old gentlemen and hoopskirted gentlewomen, who boasted that they were the last of the true old Scots, born when a Stuart was on the throne, and before their country was sold by the Whigs; she who in girlhood had seen and known many of the gallant and loyal who had dined and drunk with Kilmarnock and Balmerino, and who had drawn their swords for James VIII. at Falkirk and Culloden; who treasured in secret the white rose, and yearly drank to “the king ower the water”—she felt now that she

would be sadly at a loss and strange among English modern society. Her local ideas and usefulness, her strong Jacobite sympathies and loyalty to a dead race of kings, her nervous terror of democracy and foreigners, might pass for eccentricity; but how could those among whom she would now be thrown know or understand her little weakness for the genealogy, connexions, and past glories of the Maxwells of Nithsdale and the Crawfords of Rohallion? for she knew them to be people who spoke of the late cardinal-duke as "the dead Pretender;" who voted all that was not English absurd or vulgar, and who basked in the rays of the star of Brunswick as it beamed on the breast of "the first gentleman in Europe," the future George IV.; with her powder and patches, her broad Scottish accent, and her high-heeled shoes, she felt that she would be, in such an atmosphere, an anachronism—a fish out of water! These minor considerations of self, however, were completely merged or lost eventually in distress at the prospect of being separated from her husband, and in dread of the perils and hardships he might have to encounter at the seat of war—at his advanced years, too!

To add to her anxiety, the death-watch had ticked for several nights in the four-poster of the great old state bedroom, and this devilish little *pediculus* wrought the good lady as much alarm as Sir Harry Calvert's missive from the Horse Guards had done.

Amid all this, Flora's chief thought was, that at Shorncliffe she would be nearer Quentin Kennedy, by the entire length nearly of Britain, and as Lord Rohallion was to pass through London, he would see the Duke of York personally about him and his prospects.

The last night they were to spend in the old castle was a wild, cold, and bitter one. The waves of the Firth of Clyde boiled in mountains of white foam over the Partan Craig, and as Elsie Irvine said, "the yowls of the sealghs were heard on the wind, just as they were on the nicht that Quentin was shipwrecked, and a' body kent they were never heard for nocht." The tempest roared round the snow-clad promontory on which the old castle stood, and on this night one of the oldest sycamores in the avenue was uprooted with a mighty crash by the wind, an omen decidedly of coming woe. On that night, the *last* they were to spend in their old home, sleep scarcely visited the eyes of either Lady Rohallion or her husband. She was full of melancholy forebodings, tears, and prayers, the result of her education and temperament, and she was thinking of Flora's parents, of John Warrender of Ardgour, who fell in Egypt, and of his widow's broken heart; while in Lord Rohallion's mind, real regret for the coming separation was mingling with anxieties and little

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vanities about how he would handle his brigade in the field, as he had so long grown "rusty."

As the morning dawned—the morning of a clear and bright December day, Lady Winifred's spirits rose a little, especially after the sun burst forth auspiciously from the parting clouds. The poor quartermaster was heart-broken with the idea of being left behind; but he had the household to look after, and all the live stock, including Quentin's terrier and Flora's birds, all of which she solemnly committed to his care. On this morning, when they were to set out, trunks, mails, imperials, and all the usual incumbrances of a long journey were borne forth to the haunted gate where the carriage stood, with its four horses pawing the hard frosty ground, and their breath ascending like steam in the clear cold air. Old Jack Andrews limped about, whistling the point of war, with uncommon vigour, and with a new lightness in his eye and step, at the prospect of seeing military life again. All the tenantry of the estate mustered at the old castle-gate, and the Roballion volunteers, all in full uniform, with cocked-hats and pigtails, were there in honour of the brave old Brigadier and his gentle lady; and there, too, were all the household, from bluff Mr. Spillsby the butler, to John Legate, the long, lean running-footman, and all looked sad and downhearted. The dominie had overnight prepared a long Latin address to read on the occasion, but happily for all concerned, he had left it behind him; and now his great horn barnacles were obscured and dim, as he lifted his old three-cornered castor and kissed her ladyship's hand with profound reverence and affection, and then Miss Flora's, as they were assisted by Fernwoodlee and the quartermaster into the carriage.

"Farewell, dominie," said the old Lord, as he shook the good man's hand. "Ill expect you to write me sometimes, and tell us how all the folk here and the school bairns are coming on."

"Woe is me, Roballion! and you are again going to follow the drum!" he replied, shaking his queue and queer old wig: "it was invented by Bacchus, who, as Polyænus declares, used it first in the Indian war, but from the sorrow created by its sound, I verily believe its inventor to be the devil—the great author of the bagpipe."

"Hush, dominie," said his lordship, laughing, "for here comes Pate of Maybole."

This was the piper of the barony town, in the burgh livery, who now appeared; and as the coachman whipped up his horses, the sobs of the servants were drowned in the *skirl* with which Pate blew out his bag to the air of the good Lord Moira's Farewell to Scotland:

"Loudon's bonnie woods and braes,
I maun leave them a', lassie,
For who can thole when Britain's faes,
Wad gie Britons law, lassie?"

And striding as only a Scottish piper strides and swaggers, he played before the carriage down the avenue and out upon the high road; while there was not an eye unmoistened at that time-worn castle gate, as its old lord and his lady went forth upon their way "to the wars in the far-awa land."

It was a silent house that night in Rohallion.

CHAPTER LXVIII.

THE RETREAT.

"Lords and dukes and noble princes,
On thy fatal banks were slain;
Fatal banks that gave to slaughter
All the pride and flower of Spain.
Furious press the hostile squadrons—
Furious he repels their rage;
Loss of blood at length enfeebles—
Who can war with thousands wage?"

Old Spanish Ballad.

On the 11th of December the division of Sir John Hope quitted Alva and marched towards Tordesillas. By this time Sir John Moore had discovered that Bonaparte, abandoning his project of entering the southern provinces, was on the march to intercept his retreat towards the sea-coast and Portugal, while another column was advancing against him from the direction of Burgos. To frustrate a design that might prove so fatal to his slender army, Moore was compelled to relinquish all hope of fighting the Duke of Dalmatia; so, countermanding the order for the advance of his various divisions, he requested Romana to defend the bridge of Mansilla-de-los-Mulos, and while he fell back towards the Douro, ordered all the heavy baggage to be conveyed to Astorga. On hearing of these movements, Bonaparte exclaimed energetically to Soult, who related it to Major Charles Napier of the 43rd—

"Moore is the only general now fit to contend with me; I shall advance against him in person."

Marching to his left, Moore crossed the Douro at Toro, to form a junction with Sir David Baird on the 21st December at Vallada. On the day before this, near the magnificent Abbey of Sahagun, nine hundred French cavalry pressing on, were met by

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four hundred of ours under Lord Paget, who repulsed them by one brilliant charge, sabreing thirty, and taking two hundred and sixty prisoners. Bonaparte advanced with his main body, a hundred thousand strong, by four routes, towards Benevente, along roads buried deep in snow, through which, by force or bribery, he had thousands of Spanish labourers cutting pathways, for the winter had set in with unusual rigour; but the division of Sir John Hope, whose cavalry and artillery suffered much by the loss of their horses, which died fast of the glanders, entered the town before him on the 24th of the same month.

The sufferings of the army during this retreat towards the north-west angle of Spain were very great, and the regimental officers were compelled to carry their personal effects about with them in bags or knapsacks, for the baggage animals (carts there were none) died, or were lost by the way. All bandsmen, batmen, servants, and grooms were very properly turned into the ranks, as Moore had resolved that there should be available *as many muskets as possible*. Seven officers had but one tent, and every mounted officer had to groom and rub down his own horse: arrangements whereat the grumbling, from the staff particularly, was deep if not loud. The rations were also diminished: but of all the corps none suffered *less* than the Highland regiments. After marching hundreds of miles through snow, rain, and storm, the 79th and 92nd particularly had never a man on the sick-list, a fact attributable either to their native hardihood or the serviceable nature of their *costume*. Snow was falling heavily as Hope's division entered the crumbling walls of the small and miserable town of Benevente in Leon, where the officers and men, irrespective of rank, crowded for shelter into the houses and the castle, while a line of cavalry picquets, with a few pieces of artillery, held the bridge of Orviegro.

Weary and footsore, Quentin, after cleaning his musket, flung himself on a heap of straw in one of the rooms of that wonderful old castle which is the residence of the Dukes of Ossuna, and which Southey describes as one of the finest monuments of the age of Spanish chivalry, adding, "we have nothing in England which approaches to its grandeur. Berkeley, Raby, even Warwick and Windsor, are poor fabrics in comparison."

Projecting from a wall, a gigantic arm and hand in armour sustain a magnificent lamp to light the grand staircase of the castle. Its open galleries and horse-shoe Saracenic arches, that spring from fluted and twisted columns of porphyry and granite; its long aerial-like cloisters, its recessed seats, deep niches, and canopied alcoves, covered with quaint arabesques in scarlet, blue, and gold, were now crowded by wet, weary, and almost shoeless

(certainly shirtless) infantry, who piled their muskets or heaped up their knapsacks and camp kettles, without heed, in those noble apartments, where they smoked and made fires of whatever they could lay hands on; many a gilded chair became fuel, and pictures by Velasquez, Murillo, and other eminent painters of the Spanish school, were torn from the walls, and, with a curse on the Spaniards, rolled up and thrust under a pot of rice soup. In fact, the troops were now fast becoming reckless, and everything that was combustible was destroyed on this occasion, the family, archives of the Dukes of Ossuna alone escaping.

Maddened by cold and hunger, they cared not how they made themselves comfortable for the night; but with the first peep of dawn, the report of cannon was heard at the bridge, the bugles sounded the turn-out, and hundreds of hoarse voices were heard shouting,

"Stand to your arms! turn out! The enemy are coming on—the out-picquets are engaged!"

The division got under arms to continue its retreat, which the flank companies were ordered to cover by forming in front of the town; and so came in this dreary 25th of December.

"A merry Christmas and a happy new year!" cried Monkton to Quentin, as the grenadiers of Askerne left the battalion double-quick, and just in time to witness a very brilliant cavalry encounter.

It was about the hour of nine in the morning, and from the slope on which Benevente stands, they could see in a little plain below the bridge of the Orviegro, three squadrons of the Imperial Guard led by a dashing officer in a furred pelisse, skirmishing with the out-picquets of the light cavalry, and endeavouring to cross the river by a ford there. The red flashing of the carbines on both sides was incessant; in the clear frosty air the reports rang sharply, and the figures of the Imperial Light Cavalry were distinctly visible upon the spotless back-ground of snow. No one was hit on either side, however, as the dragoon is seldom much of a shot. But suddenly two squadrons of the splendid 10th Hussars, by order of Lord Paget, and led by Brigadier-General Stewart, defiled out of Benevente to support the picquets, their loose scarlet pelisses and plumes waving as they galloped along, and rapidly forming line, they advanced with a loud hurrah, and keeping their horses well in hand, lest they should be blown, against the Chasseurs à Cheval of the Guard, who drew up on the crest of an eminence to receive them. Many who looked on held their breath, and excitement repressed the rising cheer as the adverse lines of cavalry met! There was a mingled yell and hurrah; the long straight swords of the French on one side and

the crooked sabres of the 10th on the other, all uplifted, flashed keenly in the morning sun; then there was a terrible shock; hussars and chasseurs were all mingled in a wild tumultuous mass, and on both sides horses and men went down among bloody and trodden snow; but the French fled at full speed, leaving the ground strewn with killed and wounded men, and encumbered by scared horses that rushed about with empty saddles. Eighty-five French Chasseurs and fifty of our smart Hussars were lying there dead or writhing in all the agony of sword wounds among the snow; but with loud cheers the survivors came trotting into Benevente, bringing with them seventy dismounted prisoners, among whom was the leader of the French, superbly dressed in a green uniform that had a profusion of gold and fur trimming upon it. He was led forward between two Hussars, who had each his carbine resting on his thigh.

"Paget," exclaimed Brigadier-General Sir Charles Stewart, hurrying up at a canter, "allow me to present you with a valuable prisoner. We have just had the honour to take Lieutenant-General Lefebre Desnouettes, commander of the cavalry of the Imperial Guard."

Lord Paget bowed very low to the captive.

Pale, exhausted, and covered with sword-cuts, he was the picture of a soldier; and his eyes had that keen, bright, almost wolfish expression, peculiar to those who have recently stared the grim King of Terrors face to face on the battle-field. He was led away, and was soon after presented to Sir John Moore, to whom he spoke with intense bitterness of his own defeat.

"Bonaparte," said he, "is the minion of fortune; he never forgives the unfortunate, but ever believes them culpable!"

Moore sought to console him, and presented him with a splendid oriental scimitar, which Lefebre ever after preserved with gratitude, and wore in England, whither he was despatched at once in charge of Captain Wyndham, one of the general's aides-de-camp.

The division continued its retreat by the ruined walls and mouldering citadel of Astorga, and Villa Franca del Bierzo, and, though many perished by the way, Quentin Kennedy, endowed by spirit and enthusiasm rather than bodily strength, bore up manfully amid the fatigue, the privations, and the horrors of that long and devious retreat of so many hundred miles, along roads covered with deep snow, over steep and rugged mountain sierras, through half-frozen rivers, and by narrow defiles, followed by an enthusiastic enemy, whose well-victualled force, outnumbering by three times that of Moore, came on fast and surely, with flying artillery, lightly-armed dragoons, and pestilent little Voltigeurs, skir-

mishing every foot of the way—the sharp ringing of carbines and the boom of field-pieces being the invariable close of each day's march, and the prelude to its resumption in the cold, dark early morning, when the cavalry rear-guard held the advance of the foe in check, till the jaded and half-slept infantry pushed on, and on—hopeless, heartless, and in rags, leaving, en route, in the form of dead and dying men, women, children, and horses, traces of the havoc that neglect and disaster were making in the ranks, for now the Spanish authorities omitted utterly to supply the troops with either billets or rations, or any necessary provisions.

A junction of Hope's division with the main body of the British army was effected, however; on the 31st of December, Moore quitted Astorga with his famine-stricken force, and so hot and fierce was the pursuit, that on the following day, the first of the new year, Napoleon entered the little town at the head of eighty thousand horse and foot, with two hundred pieces of cannon, while many thousand bayonets more were on the march to join him!

The Emperor, however, went no further than Astorga, for there he left to Soult—to use his own inflated words—"the glorious mission of destroying the British—of pursuing them to the point of embarkation, and driving them into the sea!"

And the state of matters we have described continued until the army reached Lugo, after a five days' march through a rugged and savage country.

CHAPTER LXIX.

FRESH DISASTERS.

"Oh, plenteous England! comfort's dwelling-place
 Blest be thy well-fed, glossy, John-Bull face!
 Blest be the land of Aldermanic paunches,
 Rich turtle-soup, and glorious ven'son haunches!
 Inoculated by mad martial ardour,
 Why did I ever quit thy well-stored larder?
 Why, fired with scarlet-fever, in ill-time,
 Come here to fight and starve in this accursed clime?"

ON this march the army was in arrears of pay, so Quentin's remaining moldores soon melted away, as he shared them, to the last vintin, fraternally with his friends and comrades; but long ere the army reached Lugo, he saw many a strange and startling episode of horror and suffering.

Moore's troops continued to make forced marches to prevent the foe from closing on their flanks, and now every day provisions

grew scarcer. The skies were lowering, and heavy clouds rested on the tops of the gloomy mountains; the rough, narrow, and wretched roads were knee-deep in drifted snow; half-famished and half-frozen, the soldiers became desperate, and, in defiance of Moore's orders, plundered whatever they could get to satisfy the cravings of nature.

From Astorga to Villa Franca (in the mountain district called the Bierzo), is a route of fully sixty English miles, through wild and savage mountain tracts and passes, where the horses failed, as their shoes were worn away; but though there were plenty of iron-works near Villa Franca, there was no time to re-shoe them, so every hour saw whole sections of our noble English horses slip down, lest they should fall into the hands of the pursuing enemy; and then the dismounted troopers had to trudge on foot, laden with all their useless trappings. One of the 3rd Light Dragoons of the German Legion, whose horse had been shot according to the usage of war, was urged by Major Burgwesel to go on faster.

"Herr Mjaor," said he, "the game is pretty well played out with me, and if you expect me to march quicker with all this load, you may as well shoot me as you have done my poor horse."

"Himmel und Erde, get on, fellow!" shouted the major, with an angry malediction.

On this, the exasperated dragoon placed a pistol to his mouth and blew out his brains, to the horror of the stern major.

Now came rain in torrents, and even the baggage had to be dragged through the melting snow, as the mules and burros perished in scores by the way. Then the spare arms were abandoned and the extra ammunition destroyed; next, knapsacks were cast away occasionally, and everything that might serve to lighten the burden of the despairing soldiers, many of whom were found frozen and dead in the bodegas and cellars of Villa Franca by the French advanced guard. A mile beyond this place, poor Ensign Pimple (as Monkton used to call him) gave in, utterly incapable of proceeding further; weeping like a child, in utter prostration, he sank in exhaustion by the wayside, and no doubt perished during the night.

After passing Benvibre the French cavalry came up with the long line of stragglers in the rear, and slashed among them right and left, treading others under foot as they galloped through, and so stupefied were some by fatigue and others by intoxication, that they could neither resist nor seek safety in flight. Two thousand were taken prisoners between Astorga and Lugo; a thousand more fled away towards Portugal; many of these were concealed

by the Spaniards, and few were ever heard of again. So on and on the army toiled from Villa Franca to Castro up the Monte del Cebrero, a long and continued ascent, through one of the wildest districts in Spain, where, in summer, woods of umbrageous oak, alder, and hazel, with groves of wild pears, cherries, and mulberries, make the landscape lovely; but now it was wild and desolate; and there, to add to other misfortunes, the sick and wounded had to be abandoned among the melting snow.

On the sloping road towards Castro-Gonzalo, Askerne found a poor rifleman of the old 95th lying on his back, and blowing bells of blood from his mouth; he had been riddled by canister shot, and all his limbs were broken.

"Unfortunate fellow," said he, with commiseration; "what can I do for you?"

"Have me shot, sir—shot dead, for the mercy of God!" was the terrible reply.

"I looked round," says an officer in one of his letters, "when we had hardly gained the highest point of those slippery precipices, and saw the rear of the army winding along the narrow road—I saw the way marked by the wretched people, who lay on all sides expiring from fatigue and the severity of the cold; their bodies reddened in spots the white surface of the ground."

There a Portuguese bullock driver who had been with the British since the landing of the army, was seen dying amid the snow on his knees, with his hands clasped in an attitude of prayer before a little wooden crucifix, a consolation not left to the hundreds of our soldiers, who were flinging themselves down in utter despair to die, with curses and bitter imprecations on their lips—curses on the Spaniards, who, they fancied, had betrayed them.

And there, too, were women and little children!

About nightfall, just as the grenadiers of the Borderers struggled up the Monte del Cebrero through all the horrible débris that the columns in front had left behind, they passed several of the sick and artillery waggons, broken down or abandoned by the wayside. In these were many soldiers' wives and sick men dead and frozen! In one was a woman in labour dying, with her infant, amid the icy drift; in another a woman already dead, with a wailing infant tugging at her white cold breast. The little one was taken by good old Sergeant-major Calder, who wrapped it in his great-coat, but it died of cold ere the summit of the mountain was attained. From one of those covered sick-waggons that lay broken down and abandoned among the snow and sleet, there came the sound of a strange wailing song sung by a woman. This prompted Quentin to leave

the ranks, which were somewhat irregular now, and peep in. There he found a soldier of the 25th lying dead, and his wife, with their child, sitting by his side, in misery. They formed a touching group! She was evidently deranged by suffering, terror, and sorrow. She heard not the wailing of the infant that nestled among the wet straw by her side, but sat with her husband's head in her lap, and her hollow eyes fixed on vacancy, as she toyed with his hair, and "crooned" a fragment of an old Scottish song to a plaintive air, somewhat like that of "My Love's in Germanie."

"They say my love is dead,
Gone to his gory bed,
They say my love is dead,
Ayont the sea.
In the stillness o' the night,
When the moon is shining bright,
My true-love's shroud sae white
Haunteth me,
Haunteth me!
My true love's shroud sae white
Haunteth me!"

"Good heavens, sir," said a soldier, "it is poor Allan Grange, the sergeant who was broken at Colchester, and his wife, too! She's clean demented, puir thing! Ailie, woman, come awa; the regiment is moving on."

Quentin, too, tried his powers of persuasion, but without avail, and the stern order of Cosmo, to "Close up—close up, and move on—no loitering!" together with the distant boom of a French field-piece, the flash of which came redly through the drift and darkness, compelled them to leave her. If she lived she must soon after have fallen into the hands of the enemy. At all events, Ailie Grange was heard of no more.

In one of the many skirmishes with the enemy's light dragoons, a singular instance of gross treachery occurred at the little village of Palacios de la Valduerna. There a sergeant of our 7th Hussars, belonging to Captain Duckinfield's detachment, vanquished, in single combat, a French dragoon, and took him prisoner. The Frenchman threw down his sword, drew off his leather gauntlet, and held out his hand in token of amity. Then the sergeant, with the characteristic generosity of a gallant Englishman, also put forth his right hand; but inserting his left into his holster, the Frenchman drew a pistol, blew his captor's wrist to pieces, and killed his horse under him. Before the poor hussar could rise from under his fallen charger, the would-be assassin was bayoneted by some of Romana's Spanish soldiers, who in their rage and hatred made up a fire and consumed his

body to ashes ; after this, in blind vengeance, they somewhat needlessly slew his horse. At this part of the disastrous retreat nearly a hundred waggons that were coming on, laden with shoes and clothes for Romana's Spaniards, from England, but too late to be of any avail, fell into the hands of the enemy.

As the column defiled past them, Quentin saw the body of an officer lying dead under one of the wheels in a pool of blood, snow, and mire. A vague recollection, combined with a horrible anxiety, made him draw near to observe the corpse. It was that of Warriston ! his kind and generous friend, Captain Richard Warriston, of the Scots Brigade ; but "push on—push on," was the order, and there was no time given for thought, examination, or inquiry.

On, and on yet ! and at last it was found necessary, at Nogales, to abandon the military chest. Why its contents were not distributed among the troops it is difficult to say, unless that time would have been lost by the process of division. Two bullock-carts, laden with twenty-five thousand pounds in dollars, were backed over a lofty precipice, and fell crashing from the summit among the rocks and snow beneath ; and then as the waggons broke and the casks burst, the broad silver dollars flew far and wide. It was hoped that this money would escape the observation of the French, and so fall into the hands of the Spaniards. Part was found by the former, part by the Gallician peasantry, and a Highland tradition tells us of a thrifty Scots paymaster who contrived to conceal a cask or two under a certain cork-tree, where he found the specie all safe when he went back to Spain for it, after Toulouse ; and that he bought therewith a snug little estate on the shore of the Moray Firth.

At the very time that the bullock-carts with the treasure were cast over the precipice, by some absurd mistake, Quentin's battalion, with two pieces of cannon, were engaged with the enemy in order *to protect it !*

Evening was coming on, and shimmering through the slanting sleet, a cloud of French cavalry passed along the snowy and miry way, while the two field guns were ploughing lanes of death through their ranks ; but still with brandished sabres and cries of "*Vive la France ! Vive l'Empereur !*" they came on thundering to the attack.

"Square against cavalry !" was now the cry ; "square on the grenadiers !"

It was formed double-quick, and a smile of grim joy spread over every sallow and weather-beaten face as the toil-worn and tattered regiment made the movement, enclosing many of the wounded foes as well as friends. The light company formed the

rear face of the square. Cosmo was undoubtedly brave, for a lofty expression of pride and defiance spread over his features on beholding the rapidity with which the square was formed. Jolly old Middleton drew off his gloves and stuck them in his belt; he then flourished an enormous sabre, so rusty and notched in the edge that it was known as "Jock Middleton's hand-saw," saying, "I like to use my tools, lads, without mittens; the cat that wore gloves never caught mice."

The officers dressed the four faces as well as the shattered and unequal state of the companies could form them now. Sending a last discharge of grape plunging into the masses of the foe, the gunners rushed for shelter behind the wall of bayonets, and now through the gloom of evening, the wrack, mist, and smoke, on came the French dragoons like rolling thunder! As the ground was tolerably open the square was approached on three faces. Against one was a brigade of cuirassiers, their brass helmets with scarlet plumes and brass corslets with elaborate shoulder-belts all dimmed by rain; opposed to another was the Lancer Regiment of Napoleon-Louis, the hereditary Duc de Berg, with white plumes and kalpecks in their busbies; and on the third face came the Light Dragoons of Ribeaupierre, in pale green lapelled with white and laced with silver, their tricolors waving above a forest of flashing sabres.

Quentin felt his heart beating wildly as they came on. In the square, every eye lit up, every brow was knit, and every lip compressed; but not a shot was fired until the foe was within pistol-range, when, from the faces of the square, there opened a close and disastrous fire, first from the right to the left, and then it became a wild roar of musketry, the men loading and firing as fast as they could, while many a pistol and carbine-shot took effect in their ranks, and Quentin was covered by the blood of a man who was killed thus by his side.

Yells of death were mingled with shouts of rage and defiance, as horse and man went down on every hand, the front squadrons swerving or recoiling madly on the rear, thus making all advance impossible; steeds reared, plunged, and neighed, their riders groaned, shrieked, and swore; swords, helmets, shakos, and broken lances were seen flying into the air, while lancers and cuirassiers, wounded and dying, were crushed and trodden flat by hoofs and fallen horses. The whole cuirassier brigade became an undistinguishable mass of confusion and indiscriminate slaughter; but not a horseman came within sword's point of that steady and invincible square of infantry.

At that moment, when the firing slackened a little, the voice of the Master of Rohallion was heard.

"Well done, my brave Borderers! kneeling ranks, fire a volley—ready—present—*fire!*"

It rang like thunder in the winter air, and found a thousand echoes among the mountains, and ere these died away the ruin of the foe was complete. This was the first occasion on which Quentin had fired a shot in grim earnest, and a thrill passed through his heart as he pulled the trigger and sent a bullet on its errand, while ignorant of its effect amid the smoke in front.

Ere the butts were again on the earth in their original position, and the bristling bayonets were pointed upward, the cavalry were seen in full flight, leaving a terrible débris of death and bloodshed behind them on the snow-clad mountain slope.

"The battalion will form quarter-distance column," cried Cosmo, as coolly as if he was in Colchester again. Then he ordered the pouches of the dead and wounded to be emptied, as ammunition was running short. The field guns were then limbered up, and once more the weary retreat was resumed with all speed. Sergeant Ewen Donaldson, whose leg was shattered by a carbine-ball, was here left behind, after some of the soldiers had made an effort to drag him along with them.

"Push on, boys—push on, and never mind me," said the poor fellow; "before morning I shall be gone to where I'm fast wearin' awa'—the land o' the leal." And this, too probably, was the case.

The tender and compassionate heart of Sir John Moore bled at the misery he beheld hourly on this miserable retreat. He bitterly deplored the relaxation of discipline consequent on it, and he never ceased issuing orders, cheering addresses, and stirring appeals to honour and courage, to keep up the spirits of those under his command; but despair and sullen apathy reigned in many instances in officers and men alike, while the retreat lasted. But, with all this, grand and touching instances of humanity were not wanting to brighten the terrible picture.

An infantry officer, in despair of proceeding further, turned aside into a thicket of trees, to lie down and die unseen and uncared for; but there he found a soldier's wife stretched at the point of death, and, with the last effort of expiring nature, she implored him to receive and preserve her child. He did so, and endued with fresh strength and energy by the trust, he carried the infant on his back, and it never quitted his care till he reached one of the transports in the bay of Vigo, after the battle of Corunna.*

At a place where the green coats of the 95th dotted the snow,

* Edinburgh Annual Register.

showing where a skirmish had been, Quentin assisted a rifleman to place one of his comrades in a waggon that stood near.

"Tom—old fellow," said the sufferer, in a weak voice, for he was dying with a bullet in his chest, and rustled fatuously among the damp straw on which they placed him; "I say, Tom—we've long been comrades."

"Yes, Bill," said the other, in a husky voice, "ever since Copenhagen."

"Well, when I'm dead, I want you to do summut for me, and I'll give you all I have in the world. My kit's wore out, ever so long ago, but I've three biscuits in my havresack, and you're welcome to them; give one to poor Pat Riley's widow."

"But wot am I to do for you, Bill?"

"Close my right eye, Tom; dont'ee forget; the cursed French knocked t'other out at Vimiera."

"Yes, Bill—I was wounded that day, too."

Bill's eye was closed, and the snow and the sods were over him within an hour after this, and close by Tom sat, munching his legacy, for he was starving, with his fierce moist eyes fixed on the little mound where his old comrade lay.

CHAPTER LXX.

A SMILE OF FORTUNE.

"But little; I am arm'd, and well prepared.—
Give me your hand, Bassanio; fare-you-well!
Grieve not that I am fallen to this for you;
For herein Fortune shows herself more kind
Than is her custom."—*The Merchant of Venice.*

No music was heard now on that dreary retreat. The bagpipes of the indomitable Highlanders sent up their bold, wild skirl at times upon the winter blast, showing where the Camerons, the Gordon Highlanders, or the Black Watch trod bare-knee'd through the snow; but no other quickstep met the ear; even Leslie's march cheered the Borderers no more; and many a man among them wished himself with the other battalions of the corps, broiling in India, or serving anywhere but in Spain.

To reach their transports and abandon the country by sea, without risking the slaughter of a useless battle with those whose numbers were so overwhelming, was, for a time, the sole object of the British generals.

Disorders usually prevail in a retreating army, and many circumstances served to augment them on this occasion. Our soldiers were enraged by the apparent apathy or treachery of the

Spanish officials, who withheld all supplies; these latter, at the same time, did not conceal that they believed themselves to be abandoned by the British to the enemy, in whose overwhelming numbers, with true Spanish obstinacy, they refused to believe. Perceiving, however, that unless by some vigorous resistance he crippled his pursuers, a flight by sea would be impossible, Sir John Moore recalled General Fraser's division from the Vigo road, and on the 6th of January, after a sharp cavalry encounter at Cacabelos, where Colbert, a distinguished French general, was killed, he took up a position near the city of Lugo, on the Minho, in Galicia, a place situated on high ground. So pressed were the cavalry, and so dreadfully had the horses suffered during the retreat, that on entering Lugo many fell dead beneath their riders, and others were mercifully shot. Four hundred of their carcasses, with bridles, saddles, and holsters on, lay in the market-place and thoroughfares. There were none of our soldiers who had strength to dig trenches deep enough to bury them; the Spaniards were too lazy for the work, or cared not to attempt it while the enemy's voltigeurs or sharpshooters were within sight of their old ruined walls. Swelling in the rain, bursting, and putrefying, the bodies lay there, a prey to herds of devouring dogs and flocks of carrion birds.

At Lugo the army might have rested for some days, had the bridges of the now swollen rivers been blown up; but the mines had failed, and on the 5th of January the pursuing French came in sight in force, and at last a battle was looked for. The evening of the 5th proved a very eventful one for the humble fortunes of our hero, and the *last* of his service in the ranks of the King's Own Borderers.

About four in the afternoon, during a partial cessation of the sleet and rain which had been incessant for so many days, Quentin found himself posted as an advanced sentinel in front of the line of out-piquets, near the road leading from Lugo to Nogales. Dark clouds enveloped the mighty range of mountains in the distance, but from their summits it was known, by the intelligence of scouts, that the enemy was descending in force. A blue patch was visible here and there overhead, through the flying vapour, and there, already bright and twinkling, a few "sentinel stars set their watch in the sky."

After the slaughter of the worn or half-dead cavalry horses, all was still, and now not a sound stirred the air save the tolling of the cathedral bell in Lugo, or the roar of the Minho, swollen by a hundred tributaries, and rushing in wild career through an uncultivated waste of stunted laurel bushes to mingle with the Atlantic.

That day Quentin had tasted no food save a handful of *corn* which he received from Major Middleton, whom he had found fraternally sharing a feed of it with his now lean and gaunt Rosinante-looking charger, which he had stabled under a cork-tree and covered with his blanket, complimenting himself by the old adage that "a merciful man is merciful to his beast." Oppressed by the sombre scenery, the drenched and uncultivated waste, and the gloom of the December evening, Quentin leaned on his musket, a prey to a fit of intense despondency, and tears almost came to his eyes as he thought of all the horrors he had witnessed since the day on which he landed at the bay of Maciera, the campaign he had served so fruitlessly, and of *what* was before him on landing, friendlessly, in England. Better it was to die in Spain, like poor Warriston, whose dead face, as he lay with others, mangled and doubtless yet unburied, in that savage mountain waste, amid the melting snows, came keenly back to memory now!

From this unpleasant reverie he was suddenly roused by seeing a mounted officer, muffled in a blue coat, with a plain unplumed cocked-hat, riding along the chain of advanced sentinels, questioning or addressing a few words to each, as if to ascertain that all were on the alert. Gradually he came on, his horse, a lean but clean-limbed and active bay, picking its way among the rough stones and stunted laurel bushes. As he drew nearer, Quentin could perceive him to be a general officer, accompanied by an orderly sergeant in the blue, white-faced, and silver-braided uniform of the 18th Hussars. On his approaching, Quentin "presented arms."

"Walk about," said he, while touching his hat. This is the usual response of an officer when ceremony is to be waived; but, immediately after, perceiving by Quentin's uniform that he was *not* a private soldier, he came close up to him, and said, "You are, I presume, aware that the enemy is in front?"

"Yes, sir—and more immediately, Ribaupierre's dragoon brigade and Lallemand's corps."

"Exactly," replied the other, with a pleasant smile; "I like to find a young soldier well-informed of the work in hand—that he knows what he is about, and takes an interest in his profession. Your regiment is——"

"The 25th Foot, sir—2nd battalion."

"You are, I see, a volunteer?"

"Yes, sir."

"How long have you served?"

"Nearly since the campaign opened."

"Without promotion, too!"

"And likely to be without it now, I fear."

"It is somewhat unusual for a volunteer to be posted as a sentinel," said the other, with a keen glance.

"I go where Colonel Crawford orders me," replied Quentin; "and if there was much risk, I spared him the trouble by volunteering readily."

"A young fellow of spirit! Are you born to a fortune?"

"Fortune!" repeated Quentin, with a start, and in a voice that was very touching; "alas, sir, I fear that I am born only to *failure!*"

"Failure?" said the other, as his colour deepened.

"Yes, sir—like our expedition to Spain."

The officer seemed much struck by a remark that appeared to coincide with certain ideas and fears of destiny that were peculiarly his own. He knitted his brows, and said—"Young man, you speak very confidently of the fate of 'this expedition to Spain.' Do you know what you are talking about?"

"I trust, sir, that I do," replied Quentin, modestly.

"Then, perhaps," said the other, with a smile as he propounded what he deemed a puzzling question, "you will be good enough to explain the *maxims* which guide an expedition by land or sea?"

"I shall try," said Quentin, colouring deeply and seeking to remember some of the old quartermaster's enthusiastic tutelage.

"Do so."

"There are, I think, four great maxims."

"Yes—at least, and I shall be glad to hear them."

"First, sir, in an armed expedition of any kind, there should always be secrecy of design, and also, of all preparation. Second: the force and the means employed should always be proportionate to the *end* to be achieved; (which is not *our* case here, else we had been in Madrid to-night and not fugitives in Lugo). Third: there is requisite a complete knowledge of the country for which the expedition is destined; in that at least our brave Sir John Moore is unequalled. Fourth: there is required a commander who, like him, has all the turn of mind which is most adapted for that particular branch of the war."

"Upon my honour you are a very singular young man," replied the other, with something between a smile and a frown hovering on his fair and open countenance. "You might teach Cæsar himself a lesson; but before you go any further in your remarks, I think it right to inform you that I am Lieutenant-General Sir John Moore."

Quentin was silenced and petrified. He felt sinking with shame at his own confidence and sudden effrontery, both the offspring of gloomy disappointment; then he strove to remember all he had said, and continued to gaze almost stupidly at the

worthy general, who seemed to enjoy the situation and laughed heartily, and said, in a manner that was winning and reassuring—"I wish Davie Baird or Lord Paget had been with me to hear all this!"

Mild in face and disposition, though somewhat fierce in temper when a boy, Sir John Moore possessed a figure that was tall and graceful. His features were perfectly regular; his eyes were hazel, and his hair of a rich brown colour. There was a very perceptible scar on one of the cheeks, where his face had been traversed by a bullet when leading on the 92nd at Egmont-op-Zee. In his holsters he always carried the pistols given to him by the attainted Earl Marischal, when he was present, as a young subaltern of the 51st Foot, at the famous reviews of the Prussian army near Potsdam, together with a pocket edition of Horace bearing the Earl's autograph; and these he valued highly as relics of that sturdy old Jacobite, once Scotland's premier peer.

Moore was now in his forty-eighth year, having been born at Glasgow, in 1761, in a house long known as "Donald's Land," in the Trongate—an edifice demolished in 1854. But to resume:—

After enjoying Quentin's confusion for a moment, he asked—"Are there any other gentlemen volunteers serving with the Borderers?"

"No, sir, myself only."

"Indeed!—what—are you named Kennedy—Quentin Kennedy?"

"Yes, sir," replied Quentin, faintly, and his heart sunk. ("Oh," thought he, "he has heard of that accursed court-martial—who has not? It is all over with me now!")

"Have you not seen the last War Office Gazette, which came this morning from England?"

"No, sir, I am sorry to say that—that—" stammered Quentin, ignorant of what dereliction of duty might be here inferred; "I only—that is——"

"Then get a look of it, and there you will find yourself gazetted to a lieutenancy in the 7th, or Royal Fusiliers. I congratulate you, sir—your regiment is at present in England, where I wish we all were, with honour and safety."

Quentin was overwhelmed by this intimation.

"Oh, sir, are you sure of this?" exclaimed the poor lad, trembling with many mingled emotions.

"Sure as that I now address you; and if your name be Quentin Kennedy, serving with the King's Own Borderers—full lieutenant in the corps, which has *no other* subalterns. Now you cannot continue to serve thus—carrying a musket with the

25th; other work must be found for you. When will you be relieved from this post?"

"In a few minutes, sir—my hour is nearly up."

"Then you will take a note from me to Crawford, your colonel," said Moore; and drawing forth a note book, he rapidly pencilled a note, tore it out, folded it and addressed it.

"The bearer hereof," it ran, "Mr. Q. Kennedy, having been appointed by his Majesty to a lieutenancy in the 7th Fusiliers, will serve on my personal staff, as an extra aide-de-camp, until he can join his regiment, now in Britain.

"JOHN MOORE, Lieut.-Gen."

"You will show this to Colonel Crawford and to the adjutant-general, with my compliments. It will be in orders to-morrow. Wyndham has gone to London with poor General Lefebre and the despatches of our cavalry affairs at Sahagun and Benevente, so I must have your assistance in his place during this *expedition*," he added, smilingly, with an emphasis. "Captain Hardings will lend you a horse—meet me at my quarters opposite the cathedral to-morrow morning early; till then good-bye, Lieutenant Kennedy, and I wish you success!"

Moore drew off his glove, shook Quentin's hand with friendly cordiality, and rode away at a canter, leaving our sentinel in a very bewildered state of mind indeed.

CHAPTER LXXI.

PIQUE.

"These hands are brown with toil; that brow is scarred;
Still must you sweat and swelter in the sun,
And trudge with feet benumbed the winter snow,
Nor intermission have until the end.
Thou canst not draw down fame upon thy head,
And yet wouldst cling to life!"—ALEXANDER SMITH.

"A LIEUTENANT in the 7th, or Royal Fusiliers!—am I actually so?" was the question Quentin asked of himself repeatedly. There could be no doubt about it; the general had said so, and the Gazette confirmed it, that he, Quentin Kennedy, volunteer with the 25th Foot, had been appointed to that regiment, one of the oldest corps of the line—a "crack one," too—commanded by General Sir Alured Clark, G.C.B. Long known as the *South British Fusiliers*, to distinguish them from the Scottish corps and the famous Welsh Fusiliers, armed with the same weapon, the 7th were without officers of the rank of ensign until a year or

two ago; thus, at the time we refer to, their two battalions had no less than sixty-four lieutenants. This sudden promotion, which put him so completely beyond the power of his rival and enemy, the Master of Rohallion, and which gave him independence and a position in society too, puzzled Quentin for a time; but briefly so, as reflection showed him that he must owe it to the great interest possessed by Lord Rohallion, who, he was aware, had now traced him to the Borderers; and this, indeed, was the secret of the whole affair. And Flora Warrender—she must have seen his appointment in the Gazette long before it had thus casually met the sharp eye of Sir John Moore, and could he doubt that she rejoiced at the event? To be raised at once from a position so subordinate and anomalous, from the ranks as it were of that army whose dreadful sufferings he shared and whose many dangers he risked—to be raised to the rank of an officer in a regiment so distinguished as the Royal Fusiliers, and to be at once, temporarily though it were, placed on the general's staff, and beyond the reach of Cosmo's coldness, pique, and hauteur, was indeed to be independent, and to taste of happiness supreme! His heart was full of joy, of enthusiasm, and gratified ambition; but sincere gratitude and increased regard for the kind and fatherly old Lord to whom he owed it were not wanting now: and Quentin resolved to write a letter pouring out his thanks, and expressive of all he felt, on the first opportunity. He was right to make the last reserve mentally, for opportunities for committing one's lucubrations to paper were sadly wanting now when within musket shot of the French advanced guard. He was full of genuine regard for the good and great Sir John Moore, full of enthusiastic devotion, gratitude, and admiration, too! How was it possible that he could feel otherwise? Apart from the news of his promotion in life, which must soon have reached him, he blessed the chance which made his informant the resolute and gallant leader of the British army!

After obtaining the warm congratulations of those who were his friends, and who hailed him now as a brother officer, most grateful indeed to his heart were the humble but earnest felicitations of the soldiers, who crowded round him, poor fellows, all haggard, ragged, and starving though they were, begging leave to shake his hand, and to wish him all success and prosperity to the end of his days. And Quentin felt that such genuine and heartfelt wishes as theirs were well worth remembering as an incentive for the future. But little time was there for joy or loitering now, as the French were coming on and were again close at hand.

Relieved from the out-picquet on the Nogales road just as the winter dusk was deepening, he passed through the gloomy streets of Lugo, where ammunition waggons, unclaimed or abandoned baggage, and dead horses weltering in pools of dark blood, added greatly to the confusion of those crowded, and decidedly dirty thoroughfares; which were destitute alike of lamps, pavement, and police, and were full of holes, puddles, mud, and mire. There were sentinels at the doors of all the wine-shops and bodegas; yet crowds of famished soldiers loitered about them, while the dreaded provost-marshal guard, with cord and triangles, and patrols of horse and foot passed slowly to and fro in every direction, to enforce that order which the alcalde and his alguazils considered hopeless.

Quentin soon found, however, where the colonel and colours of the Borderers were lodged. It was an old mansion which had once belonged to the Knights of Santiago, the highest order of chivalry in Spain; and above its arched doors, where two of the colonel's were chatting and smoking—he saw carved on a large marble block the badge of the order: a sword *gules*, the hilt powdered with fleurs-de-lis, and the stern motto, *Sanguine Arabum*. It happened, though seated over his wine, after such a dinner as the exigencies of the time enabled him to procure, and though in company with his old friend the gallant and fashionable Lord Paget, rehearsing together their gay but somewhat coarse memories and experiences of Carlton House and the Pavilion, the Honourable Cosmo was far from being in the best of humours. A full conviction of the sudden and disastrous turn in the prospects of the expedition—the army was now only fighting to escape home—together with the knowledge that on landing in England a horde of harpies—Jews, lawyers, and tip-staves, were all ready to pounce upon him, with protested bills, accounts, I. O. U.'s, post-obits, bonds, and Heaven only knows what more, the result of his Guards' life and reckless expenditure in London—all this, we say, well nigh drove him frantic; and Paget's memories of their brilliant past, and their wild, disreputable orgies with the Prince of Wales and his set, added stings to the terror with which he viewed the future.

Flora's fair acres might have stood in the gap between him and ruin, but fate and Quentin Kennedy ordained it should be otherwise.

"Egad, Paget, you see how it is; I've drained the paternal pump dry—there are bounds to patience, and his lordship will not advance me another guinea beyond my allowance. Indeed, I could scarcely expect it; and thus, I *dare not* land in England!"

"Let us be afloat before we talk of landing," replied Paget; "it will be a damned bad affair for us all if we don't find our transports in Vigo Bay; and, *entre nous*, I think Moore has some doubts about them."

"I don't care a straw if undistinguishable ruin should fall upon us all!"

"Which is certain to be the case, if the said transports are not there," replied the other, with a yawn. "But come, Crawford, fill your glass again; is this champagne some of the stuff we found in Colbert's baggage?"

"My fate will soon be decided," said the other, pursuing his own thoughts; "to-morrow, perhaps, for I can see some indication of taking up a position here, in front of Lugo."

"Yes; but the infernal miners failed at the bridges of the Minho, and the Sil—the river of gold."

"Thus, I say," continued Cosmo, doggedly, "Paget, old fellow, my fate will soon be decided!"

"And it is——"

"Death on a Spanish battle-field, or to rot in an English prison!"

"Don't talk so bitterly; once in London again, we shall see what can be done. Another glass of this sparkling liquid!—wine, wine, I say drown the blue devils in a red sea of it!" exclaimed the gay Paget.

"Something stronger than wine for me now," said Cosmo, as he filled a large glass nearly full with undiluted brandy, and drained it; "life is short, and not very merry here."

"Egad! I know no place, however, where it is so difficult to live and so easy to die."

"Right—so easy to die!" added Cosmo, with a strange and sickly smile.

It was at this inauspicious moment that a servant in uniform brought in Quentin's name.

"What the devil can this fellow possibly want with me?" said Cosmo, full of surprise at a circumstance so unusual as a visit from Quentin; "is he below?"

"Yes, sir."

"What does he wish?"

"To see you, sir," replied the soldier, with a second salute.

"Who is it?" drawled Paget, watching his cigar-smoke curling upward, and depositing the leg he was destined to leave at Waterloo on a spare chair.

"That fellow who was tried by a court-martial at Alva de Tormes."

"Tried—ah, I remember, for everything but high treason and housebreaking, eh?—ha! ha!"

"Yes; but who gave the charges the go-by at racing speed. Send him up!"

Quentin entered with a flush on his cheek and a painful beating in his heart. He bowed low to General Paget, whom he knew by sight, and to Cosmo, who responded by a quiet stare, and who, before he was addressed, said sharply, "I generally have my eye on *you*, sir, and I thought that you were with the outlying picquets in front of the town?"

"I was, Colonel Crawford; but——"

"*Was*—and how does it come to pass that you are relieved, or here at this time?" asked Cosmo, loftily.

"Because, sir, I am now Lieutenant Kennedy, of the 7th Fusiliers, serving on the personal staff of Sir John Moore."

On hearing this Paget raised his eyebrows and smiled; but Cosmo hastily thrust his gold glass into his right eye, and glared at Quentin through it as he wheeled his chair half round, and surveyed him with cool insolence from head to foot.

"Are you mad, fellow?" he asked, quietly but earnestly.

"Less so than you, Colonel Crawford," replied Quentin, with suppressed passion; "I have here to show you a note from the general."

"To show *me*?"

"Yes, sir; because it goes from you direct to the adjutant-general for insertion in orders."

Cosmo coughed, and very leisurely opened the little note which Quentin handed to him.

"So, sir," said he, "so far as this scrap of paper imports—and I know Moore's writing well—he has appointed you an extra aide-de-camp?"

"He has done me the honour, Colonel Crawford."

"Your health, sir," said Lord Paget, frankly; "I congratulate you—wont you drink?"

"You might more usefully fill up the time necessary to qualify you for a staff appointment by serving with some corps of the army."

"The 25th, perhaps?" said Quentin, whose temper Cosmo's cutting coldness was rapidly bringing to a white heat.

"No, sir," he replied, with one of his insolent smiles, "I *did* not mean our friends the Borderers."

"What corps, then?"

"The Belem Rangers; what do you think of them?"

"Crawford!" exclaimed Lord Paget, starting with astonishment, for this imaginary corps was our general Peninsular term for all skulkers, malingerers, and others who showed the white feather, by loitering in the great hospital of Belem, near Lisbon.

Quentin felt all that the studied insult implied; the blood rushed back upon his aching heart, and he grew very pale. The conviction now that his position was *different*, that Cosmo wished by deliberate insolence to provoke and destroy him, rushed upon his mind, and gave him coolness and reflection, so he said, quietly—

"I shall not report your kind suggestion to Sir John Moore; but I presume I may now withdraw?"

"Sir," resumed Cosmo, starting from his chair pale with passion, as he seemed now to have a legitimate and helpless object on which to wreak his bitterness of soul, "sir, I refer to General Lord Paget if your bearing has not something of a mutinous sneer in it?"

"My smile might, Colonel Crawford; but not bearing, be assured of that."

"Sir, what the devil do you mean? Is it to bandy words with me? You hear him, Paget?" said Cosmo, incoherently, and purple alike with fury and a sense of shame at the exhibition he was making; "you hear him?"

"I have no intention of insulting you," urged Quentin, anxious only to begone.

"Insults are never suspected by me, but when I know they are intended, as I feel they are *now*. Even your presence here is an insult! Now, sir, do you understand me, and your resource—your resource—do you understand *that*—eh?"

"For God's sake, Crawford! are you mad?" interposed Lord Paget; "what the devil is up between you?"

"More than I can tell you, Paget."

"With this mere lad, and you a man of the world!"

"Sblood! Yes, with him."

The Master's mad pride had involved him in many quarrels, and he had paraded more than one man at the back of Montague House, in London, in the Duke's Walk at Holyrood, and elsewhere—luckless fellows who had resented his overbearing disposition—so a duel to him was nothing, and in his baffled pique and ungovernable fury he was now wicked enough to aim at one.

"Cosmo Crawford," exclaimed Quentin, his dark eyes flashing through the moisture that filled them, "Master of Rohallion," he added in a choking voice, "I have too often, as a child, slept on your good old mother's breast to level a pistol at yours, else, sir—else——"

"Bah!" shouted Cosmo, turning on his heel; "I thought so. Belem for ever!"

"To-morrow we may be engaged with the enemy," said Quentin, in the same broken voice; "I shall be in the field, and

mounted too; then let us see whether you or I ride closest to the bayonets of the French!"

"Agreed—agreed!" said Cosmo, with stern energy, as his pale eyes, that shrunk and dilated, filled with more than usual of their old baleful gleam, and he wrung with savage energy the proffered hand of Quentin, who hastened away.

"By Jove," said Paget, laughing, as he filled his glass with champagne, "this same beats cock-fighting! But what the devil is it all about?"

CHAPTER LXXII.

THE COMBAT OF LUGO.

"New clamours and new clangours now arise,
The sound of trumpets mixed with fighting cries,
With frenzy seized, I run to meet th' alarms,
Resolved on death, resolved to die in arms.
But first to gather friends, with them t' oppose,
If fortune favoured, and repel the foes—
Spurred by my courage—by my country fired,
With sense of honour and revenge inspired!"—*Æneis* ii.

"WHATEVER may be their misery," says General Napier, "soldiers will always be found clean at a review and ready at a fight." The order to take up a position and form line of battle in front of Lugo had scarcely been issued, when a change came over the bearing, aspect, and emotions of the men. Pale, weary, and exhausted though they were, vigour and discipline were restored to the ranks, with confidence and valour! The stragglers came hurrying in to rejoin the regiments, that they might share in the battle which was to give them vengeance for the past, or, it might be, a last relief for the future. Three fresh battalions, left by Sir David Baird in his advance to Astorga, had joined Sir John Moore in rear of Villa Franca, and thus, at Lugo, he found himself at the head of nineteen thousand hardy and well-tried men.

Moore's generous kindness to Quentin on this occasion served completely to obliterate the affair of the preceding evening. He soon procured him a horse, and pleased with the modest bearing, the grateful and earnest desire to serve and deserve, with the enthusiasm of the young subaltern, he presented him with the sword of General Colbert, a French officer (said to be of Scottish descent), who had been shot by a rifleman of the 95th at Cazabelos, on the 3rd of January.

"Take this sabre," said he, "and preserve it alike as the present of a friend and the weapon of one of France's bravest soldiers.

The hilt is plain enough; and as for the blade, let the enemy be the best judges of *that*. Follow me now to the lines."

That sabre Quentin resolved to treasure, even as he treasured the ring of Flora Warrender.

Grey day was breaking now, and at that dread time when the troops were forming, and the morning gun pealed from the old walls of Lugo, he knew that she who loved him so well, all unconscious of his danger, the beloved of his heart, was lying calmly in her bed at home, asleep, perhaps with a smile upon her lips, while he was here, far away, face to face and front to front with Death! He rode forth with Stanhope, Burrard, Hardinge, Grahame of Lynedoch, and others of Moore's brilliant staff, with his young heart beating high with pride and joy, as well it might with such companions and on such an auspicious day.

"On this ground, gentlemen, unless the enemy advance in great strength," said Moore, "I shall only be too happy to meet them."

As Quentin passed the 25th moving into position in close column of subdivisions, many a hand grasped his in hearty greeting, and many a cap was waved, for the eyes of the whole corps were on him.

"'Tis well," said Moore; "I like that spirit much! They seem proud of you, Kennedy, as one of their corps. Pass the orders, gentlemen, to the generals of division and brigade to prepare for action."

The staff separated at a gallop.

"Off with the hammer-stalls," was now the command; "uncase colours—examine flints, priming, and ammunition."

About mid-day, after standing for some hours under arms with their colours flying and exposed to a keen and biting wind, the British saw the dark masses of the French appear. There was no sun shining; thus no burnished steel flashed from amid their sombre ranks, which numbered seventeen thousand infantry and four thousand horse, with fifty guns; and now they were deploying into line, while many other columns were pouring forward in their rear. Moore's right, chiefly composed of the Guards, was posted on flat and open ground, flanked by a bend of the Minho. His centre was among vineyards and low stone walls. His left was somewhat thrown back, resting on the mountains and supported by cavalry. It was his intention to engage deeply with his right and centre and bear the enemy on, before he closed up with the left wing, in which he placed the flower of his troops, including the Highland Regiments, hoping thus to bring on a decisive battle, and have the French so handled by the bayonet that he might continue the remainder of the retreat unmolested. Further hope than this, alas! he had none.

As the French deployed along the mountain ridge in front of Lugo, they could not see distinctly either the strength or position of the British; so Soult advanced with four field guns and some squadrons of horse under Colonel Lallemand, to feel the way and throw a few shot at the vineyard walls on speculation.

"Bah! M. le Maréchal," said Colonel Lallemand, confidently; "they are all fled, those pestilent English, or 'tis only a rear-guard we have here."

"I suspect, M. le Colonel, you will find something more than a rear-guard," replied Soult, as fifteen white puffs of smoke rose up from the low walls in front, and a dozen or so round cannon-shot came crashing among their gun-carriages, dismounting two twelve-pounders and smashing the wheel of a third.

On this Soult drew back his squadrons and made a feint on the right, while sending a strong column and five guns against the left, where these fresh regiments were posted. Coming on with wild halloos, and not a few of them chanting the "*Carmagnole*," the French drove in the line of skirmishers, when Moore, followed now only by Quentin Kennedy, all the rest of his staff being elsewhere, came galloping along and called upon the left to "advance."

They were now fairly under fire and fast closing up. How different from such work in the present day! *Now* we may open a destructive fusillade at a thousand yards rifle-range, and so fire on for hours; then, after coming within range with Brown Bess, scarcely three rounds would be fired, before British and foreign pluck were tested by the bayonet.

"Mr. Kennedy," said Moore, "ride to the Honourable Colonel Crawford—tell him to advance at once in line; I will lead on the regiments here."

Quentin, who was tolerably well mounted, dashed up to where Cosmo, cold and stern as ever, sat on his horse at the head of the regiment.

"Colonel Crawford," said he, with a profound salute, "it is Sir John Moore's order that you advance with the bayonet—the whole left wing is to be thrown forward."

Cosmo's eyes flashed and dilated with anger at having to take an order from Quentin; he frowned and lingered.

"Did you hear me, Colonel Crawford—that your battalion is to charge?"

"Orders, and from *you*?" said Cosmo, grinding his teeth.

"From Sir John Moore," urged Quentin, breathlessly.

Now there is at times a wild impulse which seizes the heart of man and will make him set, it may be, the fate of all his future—it may be life itself, upon the issue of a single chance; and such a daring impulse now fired the soul of Quentin.

"Twenty-fifth," he exclaimed, brandishing his sabre, "you are to advance—prepare to charge."

"Dare you give orders here?" cried Cosmo, hoarse with passion, and scarcely knowing what he said; "I follow none—let all who dare follow me. Rohallion leads, but follows none."

"Come on then *together*."

"Forward—double quick—charge!" they cried together, with their horses neck and neck rushing onward, while the battalion, with a loud hurrah, fell upon the enemy, bayoneting the skirmishers and closing on the main body.

"Bravo, Kennedy!" cried old Middleton, waving his rusty sabre; "I wish Dick Warriston was here to see you to-day. It's a proud man he'd be, for dearly he loved you, lad. Whoop! here we are right on the top of the vagabonds," he added, as the front rank of a sallow-visaged, grimly-bearded, grey-coated French column broke in disorder and gave way before the furious advance of the Borderers, whose two field officers were at that moment unhorsed.

Middleton's charger received a ball in its counter and he had a narrow escape from another, which buried itself in a great old silver hunting-watch which he wore in his fob, and was known as the "regimental clock." Quentin perceived him scrambling up, however, unhurt, just as he had hurried to the assistance of Cosmo, who, some twenty yards in front of the corps, had been knocked from his saddle in the *mêlée* by two Frenchmen, who had their muskets withdrawn, bayonets fixed, and butts upwards, to pin him to the earth on which he lay helpless.

Dashing spurs into his horse, Quentin rushed upon one, and rode him right down, at the same moment burying his sabre in the body of the other. The first voltigeur was only stunned; but the second fell, wallowing in blood.

Quentin dragged Cosmo up, and assisted him to remount.

"I thank Heaven, sir," said he; "I was just in time to save your life."

"From any other hands than yours it had been welcome," said he, haughtily; "however, I thank you. Sound, bugler, to halt, and re-form on the colours!"

As Quentin rode away, the proud consciousness in his heart, that he had returned great good for great evil, gave place to another. He saw the second Frenchman rolling in blood on the ground, and clutching the grass in his agony. Then a sensation of deadly sickness came over his destroyer's heart—a sensation that he could neither analyse nor describe. So he spurred madly toward the extreme left, where Sir John Moore by accident found himself in front of his old regiment, the 51st, in which he had served as ensign.

With a voice and face alike expressive of animation, he waved his cocked-hat and called upon them as his old comrades to advance to the charge. At that moment the light company of the 76th set the example, and the whole left wing rushed furiously on the French with the bayonet. There was a dreadful yell and shock; scores of men tumbled over each other, many never to rise again; the butt-end was freely used, and in a minute or less, the French attack was routed, leaving four hundred dead, dotting all the slope. In the front rank of the 51st, Brigade-Major David Roberts engaged a French officer hand to hand and slew him; but the major's sword-arm was shattered by two bullets fired by two French soldiers, who were instantly bayoneted by an Irishman of the 51st, named Connor. He killed a few more, while his hand was in, for which he was promoted on the spot. After this Soult made no further attack, and thus it became apparent to Moore, that the wary and skilful old veteran was only waiting until Laborde's division, which was in the rear, should come up, together with a portion of the sixth corps, which was marching by the way of Val des Orres.

All the next day the two armies remained embattled in sight of each other, almost without firing a shot—Soult waiting and Moore watching—the foe coming on hourly in fresh force, till “the darkness fell, and with it the English general's hope to engage his enemy on equal terms.”

Quentin spent the evening of that anxious day in the bivouac of his old friends the Borderers, who were sharing as usual the contents of their haversacks and canteens, and congratulating each other on escapes, and none were absent save Monkton, who was stationed with a picquet of twenty men at the bend of the Minho. Before and after an action, there is an effect that remains for a time on the minds and manner of both officers and men. The former show more kindness and suavity to the latter. There is more kindness, more quietness and seriousness, and the oath is seldom heard, even on the tongue of a fool. It may be, that all have felt eternity nearer them than usual, and yet in time of war, the soldier is face to face with it daily.

Large fires were lighted all along the British line, and in their glare the piles of arms were seen to flash and glitter, while for warmth, the weary soldiers lay beside them in close ranks on the damp earth.

“A plucky thing that was of yours to-day, Kennedy,” said Middleton, “sabreing the voltigeur and remounting the colonel. You left *me*, your old friend, to shift for myself, however.”

“I saw you were in no danger, major,” said Quentin, with some confusion; “and being independent now of Crawford, I wished—I wished——”

"To heap ashes on his head; I fear I am not generous enough to have acted as you did, and marred a step in the regiment."

"A shot grazed my cap *here*," said a captain named Drummond; "another inch, and there had been a company vacant."

"I wonder what the devil Moore is loitering here for?" asked some one.

"Kennedy's on the staff now; he ought to know the secrets of the bureau," said Colville.

"Has anything oozed out, Quentin?" asked Askerne.

"He can tell us that we'll attack the French position about daybreak, before Loison, Laborde, or Ney can join," said Colyear, laughing.

"Ney is at Villa Franca," added Captain Winton, a grave and thoughtful officer. "I suspect Moore remains here, in expectation of being attacked *before* these reinforcements come up."

"Now would be the time to fall back in the night towards Vigo, and take up a position to cover the embarkation," said Askerne.

"Right, Rowland," responded Quentin; "we are only able to fight one battle, and desperation will make us do so well. And it is not meant that after winning a battle we should enter Castile again with a handful of jaded men, and not an ally to aid us between Corunna and the ridges of the Sierra Morena. I heard Moore himself say this."

"Who comes here?" they heard a sentinel challenge at a distance.

"What comes here would be more grammatical, my friend," replied a dolorous voice which they knew, as four soldiers appeared, half supporting and half carrying an officer.

"What is all that?" said Middleton.

"The mangled remains of William Monkton, esquire, lieutenant, 25th Foot," replied that personage, as the soldiers laid him on the turf near the watchfire.

"What is the matter, Willie? are you wounded?" asked Askerne, putting a canteen of grog to the sufferer's mouth.

"I should think so! a devil of a runaway horse from the enemy's lines came smash over me. I say, Doctor Salts-and-senna," he added to the assistant surgeon, who had joined the group; "I am not past your skill, I hope?"

"Why, Monkton, you haven't even a bone broken," said the doctor, half angrily, as he rapidly felt him all over; "you are sadly bruised, though, and will have to ride, if we continue the retreat."

At that moment Hardinge galloped up to Cosmo, who was sitting on a fallen tree, cloaked and alone, near his horse, for his officers seldom cared to join him, or he to join them.

"Colonel Crawford," said he, hurriedly, "the whole line is to

fall instantly back towards Corunna by a forced night march. All the fires are to be kept brightly burning to deceive the enemy, and all movements will be made left about, to prevent the clashing of the pouches being heard. Move in silence, as we must completely mask our retreat. Mr. Kennedy, you will be so good as take these orders without delay along the line, and desire the 51st, the 76th, and the cavalry of the left flank, to fall back and be off, without sound of bugle. Thirty-five miles in our rear, the bridge of Betanzos is being undermined; that point once passed, and the bridge blown up, we shall be safe!"

It was indeed time to fall back. Soult's first reinforcements had come up in overwhelming force, and in the stores of Lugo there was not bread for *one* more day's subsistence. The troops were exhorted by Moore to keep order and "to make a great exertion, which he trusted would be the *last* required of them."

At ten o'clock the march began. In rear of the position the country was encumbered by intricate lanes and stone walls; but officers who had examined all the avenues were selected to guide the columns, and just as a dreadful storm of wind and rain burst forth upon that devoted army, the rearward march began, and when the dull January morning stole slowly in, save a few wretched, barefooted, and worn-out stragglers, nothing remained of the British position in front of Lugo but the drenched and soddened dead bodies of those who had fallen in the conflict, and the smouldering ashes of the long line of watch-fires, that extended from the mountains towards the bend of the Minho.

CHAPTER LXXIII.

A WARNING.

"Soft; I did but dream.

O, coward conscience, how dost thou afflict me!
The lights burn blue. It is now dead midnight,
Cold fearful drops stand on my trembling flesh.

What do I fear? Myself? there's none else by."—*Richard III.*

SIR JOHN MOORE and General Paget, with the cavalry, covered the retreat; the former ordered several small bridges to be destroyed to check the enemy's advance; but such was the inefficiency of the engineer force, that in every instance the mines *failed*. The rain, the wind, and the sleet continued; more soldiers perished by the way, and more stragglers were taken or sabred by the enemy's light horse; then again demoralization and despair pervaded the ranks. So numerous did the stragglers of all corps become, that more than once they found themselves

strong enough to face about and check the cavalry of Lallemand and Ribeaupierre. The Guards, Artillery, and Highlanders alone preserved their discipline.

So great was the fatigue endured by the troops, that, on the evening of the 10th, when the 3rd battalion of the Royal Scots entered Betanzos, it mustered, under the colours, nine officers, three sergeants, and *three* privates; "all the rest had dropped on the roads, and many did not rejoin for three days." At this place, which is a village at the foot of a hill, where the Mandeo was crossed by a wooden bridge, they were attacked by Ribeaupierre's dragoons, who, however, were repulsed by the 28th Regiment; the bridge was destroyed, and its beams and planks hurled into the swollen stream, which swept them away to the Gulf of Ferrol. And here a party of straggling invalids, exhausted by fatigue, were closely pressed by the French cavalry; a Sergeant Newman, of the 2nd battalion of the 43rd, who was himself nearly worn out, rallied them with his pike, and gradually collected four hundred men of all regiments. With great presence of mind, he formed those poor fellows into subdivisions, and made them fire and retire by sections, each re-forming in rear of the others, so that he most effectually covered the retreat of the disabled men who covered all that fearful road—conduct so spirited that he was publicly thanked by Generals Fraser and Fane.

The destruction of the bridge more decidedly secured the retreat; but more men perished between Betanzos and Lugo than anywhere else, since that rearward march began. Moore, by his energy, massed the army, now reduced to fourteen thousand infantry, which, on the morning of the 11th January, fell back on Corunna, under his immediate and personal superintendence.

"Stanhope," said he to his favourite aide-de-camp, "we are now within a few miles of Corunna; ride forward with me, as I am all anxiety to see if our fleet is in the bay—Kennedy will accompany us."

Quentin bowed, put spurs to his horse, and quitting Paget's cavalry rearguard together, they rode rapidly along the line of march to the front. They soon reached the heights of Cornnua, and saw the town beneath them about four miles distant; then a sad expression stole over Moore's handsome face, but no exclamation escaped him. Not a ship was visible in the Bays of Orsan or Betanzos, nor in the harbour of the town; the Roads of Ferrol and all the expanse of water were open and empty! Fortune was against him and his army, for contrary winds detained the fleet of men-of-war and transports at Vigo, a hundred and twenty miles distant by sea.

The morning was sunny, and Corunna, on its fortified peninsula, was seen distinctly, with all its strong bastions and gothic spires ; its almost land-locked harbour, guarded by the castles of San Martino and Santa Cruz, with the flag of King Ferdinand VII. flying on the fort of San Antonio, and on the Pharos of Hercules. For Sir John Moore there was nothing left now but to prepare to defend the position in front of the town till the fleet should come round. He quartered his army in Corunna and its suburbs : the reserve he posted at El Burgo, on the river Mero, the bridge of which he destroyed. He also sent an engineer officer with a party of sappers to blow up the bridge of Cambria. Some delay took place in the ignition of the mine, and he despatched Quentin Kennedy to the officer with an angry expostulation. Mortified by repeated failures elsewhere during the retreat, the officer was anxious to perform this duty effectually. He approached the mine to examine it, and at that moment it exploded !

Quentin felt the earth shake beneath his feet ; the arch of the bridge sprung upward like a huge lid ; a column of dark earth, stones, and dust, spouted into the air to descend in ruins, bringing with them the mutilated fragments of the poor engineer officer, who was literally blown to pieces ; but this was a mere squib when compared with the explosion of two magazines containing four thousand casks of powder, which were blown up on the 13th, to prevent them from falling into the hands of the enemy. On this occasion, says an eye-witness, "there ensued a crash like the bursting forth of a volcano ; the earth trembled for miles, and the agitated waters rolled the vessels as in a storm ; a vast column of smoke and dust, shooting out fiery sparks from its sides, arose perpendicularly and slowly to a great height, and then a shower of stones and fragments of all kinds bursting out of it with a roaring sound, killed several persons who remained too near the spot. A stillness, only interrupted by the lashing of the waves on the shore, succeeded, and the business of the war went on."

All this powder had been sent from England and left there, by the red-tapists of the time, to be destroyed thus, while more than once the armies of Britain and Spain had been before the enemy with their pouches empty !

In Corunna, the jaded British had now breathing time, but the exulting French were still pouring on. Some of Moore's staff suggested that he should send a flag of truce to Soult and negotiate for permission to embark unmolested—a suggestion which his undaunted heart rejected with scorn and anger.

"I rely on my own powers," said he, "for defying the enemy,

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and extricating with honour my troops from their perilous position."

Food, shelter, and rest restored vigour, and force of habit brought discipline back to the ranks; fresh ammunition was served out, and in many instances the men were supplied with new firelocks in lieu of those rusted and worn out by the weather during the retreat; but hearty were the cheers that rung in Corunna when, on the evening of the 14th, the fleet of transports from Vigo were seen bearing slowly into the harbour, under full sail, and coming each in succession to anchor. At the same time, however, an orderly, sent by Sir David Baird, came spurring in hot haste to announce that the French had repaired the bridge of El Burgo, and that their cavalry and artillery were crossing the Mero, a few miles from Corunna.

With the rest of the staff, Quentin passed all that night in his saddle, riding between the town and beach with orders and instructions, for, under cover of the friendly darkness, the whole of the women and children, sick and wounded, dismounted dragoons, all the best horses, and fifty-two pieces of cannon were embarked; eleven six-pounders and one field howitzer only being retained for immediate service.

"Hardinge," said Moore, as his staff rode into the upper town, "you will ride over to Sir David Baird; you, Major Colborne, to Lord Paget; and you, Kennedy, to General Leith, to say, that at daybreak, *if the French do not move*, they are to fall back with their corps for instant embarkation."

And with these welcome orders, the three aides-de-camp separated at full speed.

On this night of anxiety and bustle, the Master of Rohallion remained idly in his billet, a pretty villa, the windows of which faced the little bay of Orsan, with the suburb of the Pescadera extending from its garden on the west towards the mainland. Paget and some other friends of his, after seeing their sound horses embarked and the useless shot, had supped with him. No one expected any engagement to take place now; they made light of past sorrows, spoke laughingly of the amusements that awaited them at home, and drank deeply. Any momentary emotion of gratitude felt by Cosmo for the noble manner in which young Kennedy saved his life at Lugo was completely forgotten now, all the recollection of that event being completely merged in a whirlwind of rage at the aide-de-camp for having taunted him to the charge, and for actually daring to lead on the battalion in the face of so many superior officers!

Cosmo had never wearied of descanting on this military enormity, and all night long, as he became inflamed by what he

imbibed, he consulted with Paget, Burrard, and others, as to whether he should call Kennedy out or bring him before a court-martial again.

The former mode of proceeding at Alva having failed "to smash him," they were averse to another, and all were of opinion that for the latter course Cosmo had allowed too many days to elapse.

"Trouble your head no more about it," said Paget, while playing with the tassels of his gold sash; "we'll laugh the affair over at Brighton in a few days or so. Soothe your mind, meantime, by the study of these classic frescoes. I wonder who the devil decorated this villa!"

"Cupid and Psyche," said Burrard, who had been adding a few decorations, such as beards and tails, with a burnt cork; "Pyramus and Thisbe; and, by Jove, the story of Leda!"

"Egad! such lively imaginations and odd propensities those pagan fellows had! *Au revoir*, Crawford; we'll have the générale beaten for the last time on Spanish ground to-morrow, and then hey for the high road to Old England!" added the gay hussar, who, before six months were past, figured in an elopement, a duel, and damages to the tune of twenty thousand pounds.

Cosmo was at last alone, and though he mixed a glass of brandy with a goblet of champagne, he felt strange and sad thoughts stealing over him. He was hot and flushed, and his heart beat tumultuously and anxiously, he knew not why. He threw open the sash of one of the lofty windows, which were divided in lattice-fashion from the ceiling to the floor, and looked out upon the night. It was silent, clear, and starry, and not a sound broke the calm stillness, save the chafing of the waves on the rocks that bordered the bay.

Cosmo's brain, at least his whole nervous system, seemed to have received a shock by that fall from his horse at Lugo. He was restless, feverish, and anxious, without knowing why; for being brave as man could be, he had no fear for the morrow, and really cared very little whether a battle was fought or not.

"What is this that is stealing over me—can it be illness?" he asked of himself.

Thoughts and memories of home, his family, and many an old and once tender association that he had long forgotten were stealing over him now, together with an uncontrollable sadness and depression of mind; his father's cheerful voice, his mother's loving face, came vividly to recollection, with emotions of tenderness for which he could not account—emotions which he strove

to repress as unnatural to him, and which actually provoked him, by the strange pertinacity with which they thrust themselves upon his fancy.

"Pshaw!" said he, "that deuced tumble in front of the enemy has unmanned me—and that fellow, too! Confound him," he muttered through his clenched teeth, "I hate him!"

At that moment the great bell of the citadel tolled the hour of three. The last note of that deep and full but distant bell, yet vibrated in the still air; the stars were reflected in the dark waters of the bay, and the light that shone in the great Pharos of Hercules, as it revolved slowly on its ancient tower, cast tremulous rays at regular intervals far across the sea on one side and the inlet of Orsan on the other. The ocean breeze came gratefully to the flushed brow of Cosmo, who suddenly perceived near him a man in a strange uniform. He stood in the centre of the garden walk at a short distance from the open window, his figure being clearly defined against the starry sky beyond, and by a ray of light which shone from the room Cosmo could perceive that his dress was scarlet. Supposing he was some straggler or other man who should be in quarters, Crawford walked boldly up to the tall stranger, who remained silent and immovable. He wore an old-fashioned flowing red coat without a collar, but having deep cuffs, all profusely laced; a large brigadier wig and three-cornered hat, and a long slender sword, and he stood with his right hand firmly planted on a walking cane. His bearing was noble and lofty; his long, pale, and handsome features, in which Cosmo recognised a startling likeness of *his own*, wore a deathlike hue, and his eyes were sad and stony in expression.

Cosmo Crawford attempted to speak, but the words failed on his lips; he felt the hair bristle on his scalp, and a thrill of terror pass all over him as the figure, phantom, fancy, or whatever it was, pointed with its thin white hand to *the plain before Corunna*, and then the whole outline began to fade, the stars shone through it, and it seemed to melt away into space!

An icy horror came over Cosmo, and his soul trembled as he remembered the bugbear of his boyhood, the story of the haunted gate at Rohallion, and the wraith of his uncle John the Master, who had been slain by the side of Cornwallis in America. He rushed back to the room and flung himself panting on a sofa. Then with a furious oath at his own timidity, folly, or fancy, he issued boldly into the garden again, but nothing was there save the laurel bushes that bordered the lonely walk where he had seen that wondrous and fantastic dream. All seemed still—

horribly so—all save the beating of his heart and the rustling of the regimental colours, which, in virtue of his rank, were always lodged in his apartment.

"Was that a warning?"—bah! And the cup of wine!" he exclaimed. "By this time to-morrow night," he reflected, "I may have been again in battle. I may be safe and scatheless, or dreadfully mutilated and beggared for life, or by this hour—dreadful thought, I may be in eternity! I may have learned the secret of life and death, of existence and extinction, and this body may be lying stark, stripped, and bloody, with its glazed eyes fixed on the stars of heaven! Bah! another glass of wine, then!"

Cosmo slept but little that night, and it was with a stern and gloomy foreboding of evil that he saw the day-dawn stealing over the dark grey sea and the lofty citadel of Corunna.

CHAPTER LXXIV.

THE BATTLE OF CORUNNA.

"Marked you yon moving mass, the dark array
Of yon deep column wind its sullen way?
Low o'er its barded brow, the plumed boast,
Glittering and gay, of France's wayward host,
With gallant bearing wings its venturous flight,
Cowers o'er its kindred bands, and waves them to the fight."
LORD GREENVILLE.

THE army was now rid of every incumbrance, and all was prepared for the withdrawal of the fighting men as soon as darkness should again set in, and four o'clock in the afternoon of the 16th was the time fixed by Moore for doing so; but lo! at two o'clock on that anxious day a messenger came from Sir John Hope to state that the whole French army, then in position on the heights above Corunna, was getting under arms—that a general movement was taking place along the entire line, twenty thousand strong!

"Stand to your arms—unpile, unpile!" was the cry from right to left.

Long ere this, the whole British army had been in position.

Sir David Baird held the right with his division, while Sir John Hope's was formed across the main road, with its left towards the Mero river; but the whole of this combined line was exposed to, and almost enfiladed by, a brigade of French guns posted on the rocks about the little village of Elvina. Fraser's division remained before the gates of Corunna to watch the coast

road, and be prepared to advance on any point. But all the advantage, in strength of position, of horse, foot, and artillery, was in favour of the enemy. The only cavalry in the field with Moore were *forty* troopers of the 15th Hussars, under the command of a lieutenant named Knight. Opposed to Hope and Baird's slender line were the heavy divisions of Delaborde, Merle, and Merniet, while the cavalry of the French left, under De Lahausaye, Lorge, Franceschi, Ribeaupierre, and others, were thrown forward along the whole British right, hemming them in between the Mero and the harbour of Corunna, and menacing even the rear so far as San Cristoval, a mile beyond Sir David Baird, whom, however, Fraser and Lord Paget covered.

Joy sparkled in Moore's eyes as he rode along the line at the head of his staff, and to Colonel Graham of Balgowan he expressed his regret that "the lateness of the hour and the shortness of the evening would prevent them from profiting by the victory which he confidently anticipated."

The afternoon was dull and sunless; grey clouds covered all the louring sky; the sea towards the offing looked black and stormy, and the ramparts of Corunna, washed by the white waves from the west, seemed hard, sombre, and gloomy; but the British were in high spirits and full of hope at the prospect of giving a graceful and a glorious close to this inauspicious campaign.

Through Moore's telescope, which he lent him, Quentin swept the French lines. He could see the masses of the old Guard in their tall grenadier caps, grey great-coats and enormous scarlet epaulettes; then the ordinary infantry of the line, in their short-waisted blue coats and wide scarlet trousers, advancing in three dense columns along the heights towards the British position. He could see the guns being unlimbered and prepared for service on the ridge of rock that covered the flank of the infantry; and he could also see the cavalry of the left; the cuirassiers of Lahausaye in helmets and corslets of brass, with flowing scarlet plumes and straight swords of great length; the chasseurs of Lorge and Ribeaupierre, in light green, with their horse-hair plumes all floating like a sea of red and white; then the picturesque column of Franceschi, in which were a corps of Polish lancers, with all their tricolored bannerols fluttering; and some of the Mamelukes of the Imperial Guard, with white turbans and crosses of gold, all brandishing their crooked sabres and loading the heavy air with uncouth and tumultuous cries. On the other hand were the cool and silent British infantry; steady and still they stood in their solid ranks, their arms loaded, primed, and "ordered," the bayonets fixed and colours flying;

and no sound was heard along all their line, save when the pipers of the Black Watch, the 92nd, or some other Scottish regiment, played loud, in defiance of the advancing foe, some historical or traditionary air of the clan or tribe from whence its name was taken or its ranks were filled. To the 42nd, with the 4th and 50th, was entrusted the defence of the extreme right, the weakest point of the line, and on *their maintenance of which* the safety and honour of the army rested.

As Quentin passed his old battalion in Hope's division on the road that led from Aris to Corunna, he saluted Cosmo, but received no response. Grim as Ajax, the Master was advancing with his eyes fixed on the enemy and his left hand clutching his gathered reins. At that moment perhaps, he thought less of the horrid dream of yesternight, than of the ruinous bonds, the crushing mortgages, the post-obits, and secret loans at fifty and sixty per cent., that a French bullet might that day close, together with his own existence, and he actually felt a species of grim satisfaction that hereby the crew of money-lenders would be outwitted.

"This is a day that will live in history, major," said Quentin, as he passed jolly old Middleton, in rear of the corps, trotting his barrel-bellied cob, an animal of grave and solemn deportment.

"Likely enough, lad," replied the other; "but I've seen too many of these historical days now, and I would sell cheaply alike my share in them, with the chance of being honourably mentioned by some future Hume or Smollett."

"So, Monkton, you've recovered your Lugo mishap."

"Quite, Kennedy," replied that individual, whom he overtook marching on the left flank of his company; "never felt jollier in my life—breakfasted about twelve to-day with Middleton and Colville on mulled claret dashed with old brandy. So we are going to engage at last! Well, I hope we shall polish off old Johnny Soult, and get on board betimes—then ho, for Old England!"

"There, gentlemen, is the first gun!" exclaimed Rowland Askerne, as he pointed with his sword to a field-piece that flashed on the rocks about Elvina. Then a 12-pound shot hummed harmlessly through the air along the whole line of Baird's division.

"Tyrol, tra la, la lira!" sang the reckless Monkton; "this begins the game in earnest!"

"At such a time how *can* you be so thoughtless, Willie?" said Askerne, with some asperity; and now, from the great French battery on the rocks, the shot and shell fell thick and fast upon

the British line, while led by the Duke of Dalmatia in person, the three solid columns of Delaborde, Neale, and Merniet, descended with yells to the assault, tricolors waving, swords flashing, and eagles brandished.

A cloud of skirmishers preceded them, and the white puffs of smoke that spirited from among the underwood, the low dykes, and laurel bushes, marked where they nestled and took quiet "pot shots" at the old 95th, and other British sharpshooters, who fell back in disorder, as the light six-pounders failed to protect them against the French heavy guns, which swept Moore's line to the centre, with round shot, grape, and canister.

From his master in the art of war, Sir Ralph Abercrombie, Moore had learned that the presence of a commander is always most useful near that point at which the greatest struggle is likely to occur; thus he remained near Lord Bentinck's brigade, and close to the 42nd, on the extreme right, and there Quentin and his staff accompanied him.

The French left carried the village of Elvina, and dividing into two great masses, one poured on against Baird's front, and the other assailed his right under cover of their gun battery, while their right assailed Hope at the pretty hamlet of Palavia Abaxo. And now the roar and carnage of the battle became general all over the field; men were falling fast on every side, "and human lives were lavished everywhere;" Baird's left arm was shattered by a grape-shot, and he was taken from the front to have it amputated; Middleton was struck about the same time, in the left side. Lifting his cocked-hat, and bowing almost to his holsters, while a cloud of hair-powder flew about his head, this fine old soldier said, faintly, to the Master of Rohallion—

"I am wounded, colonel, and have the honour to request you will order another officer to take command of the left." He then ambled away on his old nag towards Corunna.

"Close in, men—fill up the gaps," was the incessant cry of the officers and sergeants; "close up the rear ranks—close up!" and cheerily they did so, those brave hearts and true.

As it was, the sparks of the flints, the burning of priming, caused many of the front rank men to have their cheeks bleeding by splinters or scorched by powder; but these were constant occurrences before the days of percussion locks and caps.

The fire of the enemy was terrible, and all who were not wounded had narrow escapes. Quentin had no less than three during the first hour; a ball struck one of his holster pipes, another tore through his havresack, and a third perforated his shako, and had he been an inch taller, he had been a dead man. The first tightening of the heart relaxed—the first wild thrill of

anxiety over, and Quentin felt as cool as the oldest veteran there. The light field guns as they retired from Elvina came tearing past with blood and human hair upon their wheels and on the hoofs of their galloping horses, showing the carnage through which they had passed; but they were again unlimbered and brought into action to check the dragoons of Lorge, who menaced the right with pistol and sabre. Sir John, who had been watching the movements of the enemy through the openings in the white smoke which rolled along the slopes and filled all the hollows, observed that no more infantry were coming on than those which outflanked the right of Baird's division, now commanded by his successor.

"Kennedy," said he to Quentin, whose coolness delighted and even amused him, "ride to my friend Paget, and order him to wheel to the right of the French advance, to menace and attack their gun battery. Stanhope, spur on to Fraser and order him to support Paget."

While his aides rode off with these orders, he threw back the 4th Regiment in person, and opened a heavy fire on the French, now pouring along the valley on his right, while the old "Half Hundred" and the Black Watch confronted those who were breaking through Elvina.

"Well done, 50th—well done, my majors!" he exclaimed to two favourite officers who led the corps; but in the deadly struggle that ensued, one, Major Charles Napier, was taken prisoner, and the other, the Honourable Major Stanhope, was mortally wounded.

Strewed with killed and wounded, the field was now a veritable hell upon earth, all along the lines in the valley and on the hills. The boom of the heavy guns from the rock pealed solemnly on the ear. Then there was the shrill scream of the shells as they soared aloft, describing fiery arcs through the cold grey sky, seeming to streak it with light; and there was the *whirr* or deep *hum* of the cannon shot as they tore along the corpse-strewn ground, or through the empty air.

After delivering his orders to Lord Paget, Quentin turned his horse to the right and pursued the Aris road in rear of Hope's division, rushing at full speed over a great cork tree which the cannon shot had cut down; but he reined up for a moment near the flank of the Borderers.

Issuing from Palavia Abaxo, a corps of Delaborde's came furiously on with a savage yell, their bayonets fixed and tri-colors flying defiantly, though torn by grape and musketry. They were grenadiers of the Imperial Guard, and their long grey coats seemed black and sombre amid the smoke. Twicet hoed

men, the heroes of Austerlitz and Marengo, wavered, though never ceasing to pour in their fire; for the resolute aspect of the Borderers seemed to arrest them, so the human surge paused in its onward roll. Then it was that the Master of Rohallion, though cold-blooded, or animated chiefly by that selfish cosmopolitanism which is so peculiar to the Scottish aristocracy, felt something of his father's gallant spirit swell up in his heart.

"The 50th and the Highlanders are carrying all before them on the right," cried he, raising himself in his stirrups and brandishing his sword, "come on, 25th, let them see that we on the left are brother Scotsmen, as well as British soldiers—follow me—charge!"

And now, with a loud hurrah and like a living wall, the regiment rushed headlong on the foe, and plunging into the mass with the bayonet, hurled it back in ruin and bloody disorder beyond the village. In this charge poor Rowland Askerne fell dead with a ball in his heart; Colville perished under five bayonet wounds; Colyear had the staff of the king's colour broken in his hand, and many others fell killed and wounded; but Cosmo, as if his life was a charmed one, yet escaped unhurt, and re-formed the corps in splendid order close to the village of Palavia Abaxo. Quentin, who had only checked his horse to witness his old comrades make this most glorious charge, galloped on towards the right, where he found the foe still pressing forward, and Moore, sword in hand, at the head of the 42nd, most of whose pouches were now empty.

"My brave Highlanders!" the general exclaimed, "you have still your bayonets—remember *Egypt*!"

With a wild cheer, their plumes and tartans waving amid the smoke, the Celts rushed on and drove the French back in disorder upon Elvina.

A few minutes after this, just as Quentin dismounted to breathe his horse, and just as Captain (afterwards General and Viscount) Hardinge came forward to report that the Guards were advancing to support Bentinck's brigade, a round shot from the enemy's battery on those fatal rocks passed through them. By the velocity of the ball, the mere force of the air, Quentin was knocked down, breathless and panting. When he staggered up, he found the general lying near him, and a startled group gathering round them. *The same ball* had mortally wounded Sir John Moore, by shattering his left breast and shoulder. Hurled from his saddle, he now lay on his back, bleeding and dying!

CHAPTER LXXV.

THE BURIAL.

"Not a drum was heard, not a funeral note,
As his corse to the ramparts we hurried,
Not a soldier discharged his farewell shot,
O'er the grave where our hero we buried."

"We buried him darkly at dead of night,
The sods with our bayonets turning,
By the struggling moonbeams' misty light,
And the lantern dimly burning."—CHARLES WOLFE.

MOORE's first impulse was to struggle into a sitting posture, and, while resting on his right hand, to watch the wild conflict between the French and Highlanders at Elvina. Not a sigh of pain escaped him, as he bent his keen blue eyes on the corps engaged in front; but on seeing the black and crimson plumes of the 42nd triumphantly waving in the village, a smile of gratification stole over his handsome face, and he allowed himself to be borne to the rear by six Highlanders and guardsmen, Quentin Kennedy and Captain Hardinge assisting to keep him in an easy position with the sash of the latter.

"Report to General Hope that I am wounded," said he, calmly, "and desire him to assume the command."

Quentin observed that Sir John's sword had got entangled in the wound, and that the hilt was actually entering it. On this, Captain Hardinge kindly and gently attempted to unbuckle it.

"Never mind it, dear Hardinge," said the dying hero; "I had rather it should go out of the field with me."

Fast flowed the blood, and the torture of the complicated wound was terrible! His hands were become cold and clammy, and his face grew deadly pale in the dusky twilight.

"Colonel Graham of Balgowan, and Captain Woodford of the Guards, are both gone for surgeons," said Quentin, in his ear; while Captain Hardinge now strove in vain to stop the crimson current with his sash; "they will soon be here."

"You will recover from your injuries," said Hardinge; "I can perceive it, Sir John, by the expression of your eyes."

"No, Hardinge," said he, gravely; "I feel *that* to be impossible!"

Several times he made the bearers turn him round that he might behold the field of battle, and then a sublime expression stole over his fine face on seeing that everywhere the French

were falling back, and that his slender army, after all its sufferings, was triumphant!

At this moment a spring waggon passed, in which lay Colonel Wynch, of the 4th Regiment, who was wounded.

"Who's in that blanket?" asked the colonel, faintly.

"Sir John Moore, most severely wounded," replied Quentin.

On hearing this, the good colonel, though bleeding fast, insisted on letting his general have the waggon; but the Highlanders urged that they would carry him easier in the blanket, "so they proceeded with him to his quarters in Corunna, weeping as they went."

Still the echoing musketry pealed through the murky air, and still the death-dealing blaze reddened the dusk of the coming evening. Heavily it volleyed at times in the intervals between the cannon on the rocks, and through the mingled haze up came the blood-red disc of the winter moon. Great clouds of white powder smoke crept sluggishly along the earth, and through it the flashes of the French guns above Elvina came redly and luridly out.

On being brought to his billet in Corunna, Sir John Moore was laid on a pallet and examined, and then all could see the terrible nature of his wound. The entire left shoulder was shattered; the arm hung by a piece of skin; the ribs over the heart were stripped of flesh and bruised to pieces, and the muscles of the breast were torn in long strips that had become interlaced by the recoil of the fatal cannon-ball. In the dusk of the gloomy apartment, where he lay rapidly dying on a poor mattress, he recognised the face of Colonel Anderson, an old friend and comrade of twenty years and more. It was the third time Anderson had seen him borne from a field thus steeped in blood, but never before so awfully mangled. Moore pressed the hand of his old friend, who was deeply moved.

"Anderson," said he, with a sad smile, "you know I have always wished to die in this way."

Anderson answered only with his tears, yet he was a weather-beaten soldier, who had looked death in the face on many a hard-fought field.

"Are the French beaten?" Moore asked of all who came in, successively, and the assurances that they were retiring fast soothed his dying moments.

"I hope the people of England will be satisfied—I hope my dear country will do me justice!" said he, with touching earnestness; "oh, Anderson, you will see my friends at home as soon as you can—tell them everything—my poor mother——" Here his voice completely failed him—he became deeply agitated; but

after a pause said, "Hope—Hope—I have much to say to him, but am too weak now! Are all my aides-de-camp well?"

"Yes," replied Anderson, who did not wish to distress him by the information that young Captain Burrard was mortally wounded.

"I have made my will, and—and—have remembered all my service. Colbourne has it—tell Willoughby that Colbourne is to get his lieutenant-colonelcy.—Oh, it is a great satisfaction to me that we have beaten the French. Is Paget in the room?"

"No," replied Anderson, in a low voice.

"It is General Paget, I mean; remember me to him—he is a fine fellow! I feel myself so strong—ah, I fear that I shall be a long time in dying!"

In the intervals of his faint and disjointed remarks the boom of the distant artillery was occasionally heard, and their fitful flashes reddened the walls and windows of the room where he lay.

"Is that young lieutenant of the Fusiliers—Kennedy—is, is he here!"

"I am here, sir," said Quentin, in a choking voice.

"I cannot see you—the light of my eyes fails me now. I meant—I meant—for you."

What he "meant" to have done, Quentin was fated never to know.

In broken accents the general thanked the surgeons politely for the care they had taken; and apologized for the trouble he gave them. He then said to the son of Earl Stanhope, who served on his staff,

"Remember me—Stanhope—to—your sister."

He referred to the famous and brilliant Lady Hester Stanhope, whom he was said to have loved, and who died in Syria in 1839. Here his voice again completely failed him, and while pressing to his breast the hand of Colonel Anderson, who had saved his life at St. Lucia, he expired without a struggle in his forty-eighth year.

All stood in silence around the pallet whereon that brave gentleman and Christian soldier lay dead, and some time elapsed before they could realize the full extent of the calamity which had befallen them, and with moistened eyes they watched the pale still face, the fallen jaw, the shattered and blood-soaked form. Just as Colonel Anderson knelt down to close the eyes of his dead friend and commander, Quentin Kennedy, with a heavy sigh in his throat, a sob in his breast, issued from the house, and grasping the sabre of Colbert, Moore's doubly-prized gift, he leaped on his horse, and, as if to relieve himself from thoughts of

grief and sorrow, galloped towards the battle-field. The night was now quite dark, and Sir John Hope had succeeded in following out Moore's dispositions so well, that he had driven the whole French line so far back that the British had now advanced far *beyond* their original position. All Soult's ammunition was expended, though his troops were still the most numerous. He could not advance, and neither could he retreat, as the rain-swollen Mero was foaming along in full flood in his rear, and the rudely re-constructed bridge of El Burgo was his only avenue for escape. It was now that Hope ordered a great line of watch-fires to be lighted by the picquets, and to have them kept burning to deceive the enemy, while the wounded were carried off, and the whole army embarked, covered by Rowland Hill's brigade, which was posted in and near the ramparts of the citadel. The field presented a scene of unexampled horror as Quentin rode back towards Corunna. Worn out by the long day passed under arms, the troops fell back, in somewhat shattered order, by companies and regiments towards the beach, the shadows of night concealing innumerable episodes of suffering, of solitary and unpitied dissolution.

The British loss was estimated at eight hundred, the French at three thousand men, so superior were our arms and firing.

In a place where the dead lay thick there sat a piper of the 92nd; he was wounded and bleeding to death, yet he played to his retreating comrades so long as strength remained, and then lay back dead, with the mouth-piece of the chanter between his relaxed jaws. Everywhere in the dark Quentin heard voices calling for water.

"Un verre de l'eau, pour l'amour de Dieu!" cried many a poor Frenchman unheeded, as the columns fell back in fierce exultation upon Corunna, in many instances double quick.

Quentin rode back to the town, a three-miles' distance, and having neither post nor duty to repair to, went straight through the dark and crowded streets to the house where he had seen his beloved leader expire. The door stood open; the mansion was dark, empty, chilly, and silent, and the body had been removed, he knew not where. Just as he was turning away irresolute whether to inquire for the Borderers and get into one of the hundred boats now plying in the dark with war-worn troops, between the mole and fleet of transports, or whether he should join the staff of General Hill, whose brigade still occupied the citadel, a mounted staff-officer passed near him, and, by the light of a torch held by a Spaniard, who ran through the street, they recognised each other.

"'Tis well I have met you, Kennedy—come this way—we are about to pay the last earthly rites to poor Sir John Moore."

He who spoke was Captain Hardinge, and Kennedy, without a word, for his heart was very full, accompanied him into the strong old citadel of Corunna. The church bells were tolling midnight, and all was pitchy blackness around, for the moon was hidden; but in the dim distance, along the abandoned position on the hills, a line of watch-fires burned like dim and wavering stars to deceive the beaten but yet too powerful enemy.

The dim light of a lantern shone faintly on a group of officers who stood near, silent and thoughtful, and leaning on their swords. All were bareheaded. Beside them lay a body muffled in a blue cloak and a blanket soaked with blood—the mutilated remains of Moore, for whom no coffin could be procured. Close by, a party of the 9th or East Norfolk Regiment were digging a grave, and there stood the chaplain-general, book in hand, but without a surplice, for the sound of distant cannon announced that the French, already discovering that they were foiled, were pushing on to St. Lucia, and hastened the interment. The “lantern dimly burning” was held by Sergeant Rollo, of the Artillery, who died lately at Tynemouth, in his eighty-second year, and by its fitful light the body was deposited in its last home.

“Aid me, good gentlemen,” said Colonel Anderson, with a broken voice, as the aides-de-camp lowered the remains into the rudely-dug hole, Quentin as the youngest carrying his feet. “It is a strange fatality, this! He always said that if he fell in battle, he wished to be buried where he died, and you see, gentlemen, his wish has been fulfilled.”

Near him lay his countryman, General Anstruther, who had died of suffering and privations on the march. Hastily the burial service was read, and the soldiers of the brave old 9th covered him up, literally, “the sod with their bayonets turning.” All lingered for a few minutes near the spot, and when they withdrew, there was not an eye unmoistened among them. Thus passed away Sir John Moore, like Wolfe, in the moment of victory!

“A soldier from his earliest youth,” says General Napier, “he thirsted for the honours of his profession, and feeling that he was worthy to lead a British army, hailed the fortune that placed him at the head of the troops destined for Spain. The stream of time passed rapidly, and the inspiring hopes of triumph disappeared, but the austere glory of suffering remained; with a firm heart he accepted that gift of a severe fate, and confiding in the strength of his genius, disregarded the clamours of presumptuous ignorance; opposing sound military views to the foolish projects so insolently thrust upon him by the ambassador, he conducted a long and arduous retreat with sagacity, intelligence, and fortitude. No insult could disturb him, no remonstrances shake his deter-

mination; fortune frowned without subduing his constancy; death struck, and the spirit of the man remained unbroken, when his shattered body scarcely afforded it habitation. Having done all that was just towards others, he remembered what was due to himself. Neither the shock of the mortal blow, nor the lingering hours of acute pain which preceded his dissolution, could quell the pride of his gallant heart, or lower the feeling with which (conscious of merit) he asserted his right to the gratitude of the country he had served so truly.

"If glory be a distinction, *for such a man death is not a leveller!*"

CHAPTER LXXVI.

TOO LATE.

"The storm of fight is hushed; the mingled roar
Of charging squadrons swells the blast no more:
Gone are the bands of France; the crested pride
Of war, which lately clothed the mountain side,
Gone—as the winter cloud which tempests bear,
In broken shadows through the waste of air."

GREY dawn came slowly in, stealing over land and sea, as Quentin rode from the citadel of Corunna. It was difficult to believe that one night—one short night only—filled the interval of time since the fierce excitement of yesterday. Within those few hours how much had happened! Many an eye that met his with a kind smile was sightless now, and many a cheerful and hearty voice with which he was familiar was silenced for ever. When passing through one of the streets, he came suddenly upon Sir John Hope, who now commanded the army, and who said, while reining in his horse, which looked jaded and weary as himself—

"Oh—glad I've seen you, Mr. Kennedy; is your horse fresh?"

"Tolerably so, sir," replied Quentin.

"Then you will oblige me by riding round by the Santiago road, over the ground where Fraser's division was posted yesterday, before he advanced to support Paget, and bring off any stragglers you may see there. We have not a moment to lose, as the French are getting several guns into position above the San Diego Point, to open on our transports."

Without waiting for an answer, and as if his expressed wish was quite sufficient, the general cantered off towards the mole.

No way delighted with his duty, in the grey twilight of the morning, Quentin galloped through the Pescadera, quitted the outer fortifications, issued upon the road that led to Santiago de

Compostella, and ere long found himself on that which he had now no heart to look upon—the field of battle—that ripe harvest of death and suffering! The dead were there mutilated in every conceivable mode, and lying in every conceivable position; some lay in little piles where the grape had mowed them down. Red-coat and blue-coat, Frank and Briton, the red-trowsered Celt of Gaul and the kilted Celt of Scotland, lay over each other in heaps, many of them yet in the death clutch of each other, but all sleeping peacefully the long, long slumber that knows no waking.

Muskets smashed at the stock, swords broken, bayonets bent, caps crushed; belts, plumes, and epaulettes torn; drums broken and bugles trod flat; half-buried shot and exploded shells, strewn all the ground, which was furrowed, torn up, and soaked in blood; trees were barked and lopped by the passing bullets, and hedges were scorched by fire. Already the plunderers had been at work; an officer, covered with wounds, lay stripped, nearly nude, so his uniform had doubtless been a rich one. He was quite dead, and wore on his left arm a bracelet of female hair—a love relic; his head rested in the lap of a beautiful Spanish girl, so dark that she was half like a mulatto or gitana of Granada, and such she appeared to be by her picturesque costume. She was weeping bitterly, and over her dark cheeks and quivering lips the hot tears fell upon the cold face of the dead man. Her sobs were quite inaudible, for her grief was too deep for utterance. Close by, with the medals of many an honourable battle on his breast, lay a grenadier of the Garde Impériale, who had died about twenty minutes before, and the calm of dissolution was smoothing out the wrinkles that care had traced upon his now ghastly face—so smoothly then that he became in aspect almost young again, as when, perhaps, a conscript he left his father's cottage and his mother's arms.

As Quentin rode on many called to him for succour that he was unable to yield, and to their piteous cries he was compelled to turn a deaf ear. Many lay wounded, faint and unseen, among the long rich grass, where they were lulled alike by weakness and the hum of insect life awaking with the rising sun; and these scarcely noticed him as he trotted slowly past, carefully guiding his horse among them. Tormented by thirst, many crawled, like bruised worms, to where a little runnel ran down the green slope from San Cristoval, and drank thirstily of its water in the hollow of their hands, and without a shudder, though the purity of the stream was tainted by blood, for further up lay a soldier of the Cameron Highlanders, dead, with his head buried in the stream. He, too, had crawled there; but the weight of his knapsack had pressed his head and shoulders below the water, and thus, unable

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to rise from weakness, the poor fellow had actually been choked in a hole about twelve inches deep. No stragglers were visible, and an awful stillness had succeeded to the roar of sounds that rung there yesternight; and now from his reverie Quentin was roused by the boom of a cannon at a distance. Others followed rapidly, and at irregular intervals. It was the French guns above St. Lucia firing over the flat point of San Diego on the last of the transports and the last of our troops who were embarking. Hill's brigade had now left the citadel, and Beresford, with the rear-guard, had already put off from the shore. Such were the startling tidings Quentin received from a mounted Spaniard, a fellow not unlike a contrabandista, who passed, spurring with his box-stirrups recklessly over the field towards Santiago. On hearing this, Quentin instantly galloped towards the harbour. It was too late now to think of getting his horse off, so he resolved to abandon it and take the first boat he could obtain. The last of the troops were gone now in the English launches, and not a single Spanish *barquero* could he prevail upon to put off; and so furious was the cannonade which the French had opened from the headland to the southward of Corunna, that many of the masters of our crowded transports cut their cables; four ran foul of each other and went aground in shoal water. Then, amid the cries, cheers, uproar, and a thousand other sounds on land and sea, the troops were removed from them to others, and they were set on fire, while the first ships of the fleet were standing out to sea, and had already made an offing.

This delay nearly proved favourable to Quentin. A Spanish boatman at last offered for ten duros to take him off to the nearest ship, which lay about a mile distant; but just as he dismounted to embark, a yell of rage and terror was uttered by the crowd upon the mole, and a party of French light dragoons rode through them recklessly, treading some under foot and sabreing others. At the risk of being pistolled, Quentin was about to spring into the sea, when an officer made an attempt to cut him down, but his cap saved his head from the first stroke. In wild desperation, with one hand he clung to the chasseur's bridle, and with the other strove to grasp his uplifted sword-arm.

"*Rendez-vous!*" cried the Frenchman, furiously.

"*Eugene—sauvez moi!*" was all that Quentin could utter, ere his assailant, whom at that moment he recognised, cut him over the head, and he fell, blinded in his own blood. It was the last blow struck in our first campaign in Spain.

When Quentin partially recovered he found himself supported in the arms of the young Lieutenant de Ribeaupierre, who was profuse in his exclamations of sorrow and regret as he bound the

wound up with his own hands, and led him away from the mole, expressing genuine anxiety and commiseration.

"Take care of your prisoner, M. le Lieutenant," said an officer, authoritatively. "*Sang Dieu!* we have not picked up so many!"

"I shall be answerable for him. Ah, mon Dieu! why did I not know you sooner? Why did you not speak first, my dear friend?" Ribeaupierre continued to repeat.

The captain of his troop gave them a stern and scrutinizing glance. He was a forbidding looking man, with that swaggering spur-and-sabre-clattering bearing peculiar to some of those who had found their epaulettes on the barricades or among the ruins of the Bastile—a species of military ruffian, whose bearing was tempered only by the politeness which all military discipline—French especially—infuses in the manners of men.

"Take his sword away," said this personage, gruffly.

"Eugene, ask him if I may retain it—it was the last gift of Sir John Moore!" said Quentin, with intense anxiety.

"That is well—you shall keep it, monsieur," said the gruff captain; "Sir John Moore was indeed a soldier!"

"Am I, then, a prisoner?" said Quentin, with a sigh of intense bitterness, as he looked after the distant ships, now beyond even the range of the guns at San Diego, and bearing away with all their sails set—away for England!

"My captain has seen you—it must be so," replied Ribeaupierre, leading him into the city; "but prisoner or not, remember, mon ami, that you are with *me*."

The measured tramp of infantry was now heard, and guarded by fixed bayonets, some thirty or forty British prisoners passed with an air of sullen defiance in their faces and bearing. They were men of all regiments, gleaned up on the field or in the suburbs, and they were marched towards the citadel. Quentin gave a convulsive start as he recognised the face of Cosmo among them! He saw Quentin covered with blood—wounded to all appearance severely, and a prisoner too; so he gave him a parting smile full of malignity and hate.

Quentin cared not for this; he sprang forward to speak with him; but at that moment the blood burst forth afresh, his senses reeled, and he fainted. On that evening the tricolour was seen hoisted half-mast high on the citadel of Corunna, and the British fleet, though "far away on the billow," could hear the French artillery as they fired a funeral salute over the grave of Sir John Moore, in a spirit that was worthy of France and the best days of France's chivalry!

True it is, indeed, that "he whose talents exacted the praises

of Soult, of Wellington, and of NAPOLEON, could be no ordinary soldier."

But there was *one* in whose heart a blank remained that no posthumous honours could ever fill up—the heart of his mother, to whom Sir John Moore was ever a tender and affectionate son, and whom he loved with great filial devotion.

It was not for some weeks after all this that Quentin learned that the Master of Rohallion had been sent a prisoner of war to Verdun, in the department of the Meuse, where his fierce pride having procured him the enmity of the commandant, he could never effect an exchange; thus he remained on parole five long and miserable years, even until the battle of Toulouse was fought; and, in the meantime, worthy old Jack Middleton recovered from his wound, and was appointed lieutenant-colonel of the 2nd Battalion of the King's Own Borderers.

CHAPTER LXXVII.

MADAME DE RIBEAUPIERRE.

"Who should it be? Where shouldst thou look for kindness?
 When we are sick, where can we look for succour?
 When we are wretched, where can we complain?
 And when the world looks cold and surly on us,
 Where can we go to meet a warmer eye
 With such sure confidence as to a mother?"—JOANNA BAILLE.

A MONTH after the occurrence of the stirring events we have just narrated, Quentin Kennedy found himself an inmate of the same house with his young French friend at Corunna—the pretty villa that faced the bay of Orsan, the same mansion in which the Master of Rohallion spent that remarkable night before the battle.

General de Ribeaupierre had been appointed by Marshal Soult military governor of the town and citadel of Corunna, in which there was a strong French garrison; but instead of occupying the gloomy quarters assigned to the governor, Madame de Ribeaupierre, who had joined him, preferred the little Villa de Orsan near the coast, and had prevailed upon him to place Eugene on his staff as an aide-de-camp, and thus the whole of her household now seemed, for the time, to be peacefully located in that remote corner of Gallicia. Both madame and her husband the general were considerably past the prime of life. He was a fine courtly gentleman of the old French school, and in his secret heart was a sincere monarchist, but not so rashly as to oppose

in act or spirit the tide of events which had replaced the line of St. Louis by Napoleon, with whom he had served early in life, in the Regiment of La Fère. Madame might still be called handsome, though long past forty. Perfectly regular, finely cut, and having all the impress of good birth and high culture, her features were remarkably beautiful. Her manner was singularly sweet, gentle, and pleasing; yet she had an eye and a lip indicative of a proud and lofty spirit, that had enabled her to confront the blackest horrors of the Revolution in France. Powdered white as snow, she wore her hair dressed back over a little cushion, with a few stray ringlets falling behind in the coquettish manner of the old Bourbon days, while her full bust, plump white arms, her short sleeves with long elbow-gloves, her peaked stomacher and her amplitude of brocade skirt, with many a deep flounce and frill of old Maltese lace, all made her a pleasing picture at a time when, in imitation of the prevailing French taste, the English woman of fashion wore a huge muslin cap, her waist under her armpits, and her skirts so tight that she resembled nothing in this world but a long bolster set on end.

Knowing how much the young prisoner of war and Eugene owed to each other, and how much the former had suffered recently under the sabre of the latter, she rivalled her husband in kindness, and was unremitting in her hospitality, her nursing, and her motherly attention.

Quentin had the care of the best surgeons on the French staff—a class of medical men who far excelled the rabble of apothecary boys then commissioned for the British army; the cool season of the year was favourable for his recovering from such an ugly slash on the caput as Eugene's steel had bestowed; so, our hero, having youth and health on his side, grew rapidly well, and by the 16th of February—one month after the battle—he had become quite convalescent; but politeness even could scarcely make him repress his impatience to begone; yet he knew that, though the guest of General Ribeaupierre, he was still a prisoner of war, and could not leave any French territory until duly exchanged. During his illness he had many a strange and fantastic dream of Flora and of home. But now there came to him dim memories of an infancy *beyond* that spent in Rohalton; there was the quaint foreign town, with its winding river, its antique bridge, its boats and windmills. Like a dream, or some vision of mystic memory, he remembered this place in all its details and features, and with them came the old and confused recollection of a lady, it might be, nay, it *must* have been, his own mother, in rich velvet with powdered hair. Then came his father's face, pale and despairing, and the night of the wreck at

the Partan Craig, all jumbled oddly together. Was it a sense of pre-existence—that sense felt by so many at different times—that haunted him? Was it a sense of the *unreality* of the present conflicting with the certainty of the past? We cannot say; but there came upon his mind a strange consciousness that this scene, this river, with its town and woods and hills, this lady in velvet and powder, were not creations of the fancy, and were not new to him. Was it a phase of that which is termed by Dr. Wigan the “duality of the human mind,” which comes upon us at times—

“As when with downcast eyes we muse and brood,
And ebb into a former life?”

We pretend not to say; but poor Quentin was sorely puzzled, and that sabre cut in no way made his reasoning faculties clearer.

His room, a large one facing the bay of Orsan, was decorated for him daily by a quantity of beautiful flowers, which madame procured from the conservatory of the captain-general, scarlet and white camellias, rare geraniums, and glorious roses of every hue; while in the trellis-work verandah without were magnolias and creeping plants whose tendrils were covered with odoriferous flowers, blending and mingling pleasantly with the fragrant and earthy odour of the tiled floor, which was daily sprinkled with spring water. And there in a softly-cushioned easy-chair he sat for hours gazing dreamily out upon the sunlit bay, where the brown Spanish fisher-boats, manned by dark and picturesque-looking fellows in shirts and caps of scarlet and blue, were always preparing for sea, or tacking out of the bay with the white foam curling under the bows—a life of movement and bustle that contrasted sadly with his own inertia, and made him feverish with impatience. Even Eugene's aspect, as he came clattering and rattling to and fro, between the citadel and the villa, in uniform and accoutred with spurs and sabre, showed that the game of life was still played briskly by others, and fretted Quentin's soul.

“A prisoner,” he repeated to himself, “and for heaven knows how long! Is this the fruit of my ambition? Is this the prize I have striven, struggled, and starved—fought and bled for during all the horrors of that campaign? Unlucky indeed was the hour when Hope sent me beyond the city on a bootless errand, and when Eugene cut me down on that accursed beach! Captivity even thus, though surrounded by every kindness and luxury, is more than I can either bear or endure! Besides,” he added, bitterly, aloud, “I may be reported dead or missing, and Flora—may—might—and my commission too—may be cancelled.”

“No, no, my good young friend,” said Madame du Ribeau—

pierre, who had entered unheard; "my husband, the general, saw all that properly arranged, and despatched Eugene in person, with a memorandum of your name and regiment, to the commissaire for British prisoners, to inform him that we had you here, where we mean to keep you as long as we can."

"It was most kind, dear madame," said Quentin, bowing low to hide confusion for his petulance, and leading the lady to a chair close by his own.

"Kind, monsieur, say you? It was but just and proper that your friends should know of your safety," said she, with a bending of the neck, a species of bow that reminded Quentin of old Lady Rohallion; for this Frenchwoman had all that old-fashioned grace which, in Scotland, died with the Jacobites, and in France expired with the monarchy. "Judging by my own fears and emotions, I was most anxious that—that your mother, I presume, should know that you, at least, had not perished on that unhappy 16th of January."

"My mother," repeated Quentin, and with the memory of his recent dreams a thrill of sadness came over his heart, as he looked into the fine dark eyes of this noble French matron, who seemed so inspired by feminine tenderness and commiseration that she placed her white hand caressingly on the half-healed scar which Quentin's short crisp hair but partially concealed.

"A naughty boy was my Eugene to do this, but he has never ceased to deplore it. Yes, your mother; ah, mon Dieu! it was well that she did not see you as I saw you, after the mischief Eugene wrought, when the Chasseurs of the 24th carried you into the citadel covered with blood! Yet, if she knew all, she might safely trust you with me; for I have known what it is to lose a child ere this, and others whom I loved dearly—to be left alone, reft of that being whom I hoped was to love and remember me long after I had passed away. Eugene is a good boy, and I love him dearly; but you—your mother, mon ami?"

"Madame, I have no mother."

"Mon Dieu! and you so young!"

"No, nor any relation in the world," said Quentin, in a voice half angry and half broken; "save some brave friends who died at Corunna, and one in Scotland, far away, I never had any who loved me."

"L'Ecosse—l'Ecosse!" repeated Madame de Ribeaupierre, with sudden interest. "We old-fashioned French love the memory of the old alliances when our royal houses so often intermarried, and still respect the land where the line of St. Louis finds a home; and so," she added with kindling eyes, "monsieur is an Ecosais?"

"Yes, madame, I have every reason to believe so."

"To believe—only to believe, monsieur?"

"Yes, madame."

"How?"

"It is my secret," said Quentin, smiling.

"Pardonnez-moi!" said madame, colouring slightly.

"My name is one of the oldest in Scotland."

"True—true; mon Dieu! I know there are earls of that name who have the tressure floré and counterfloré in their coat-of-arms," said she, while a sad and beautiful smile lit up her fine face. "I had a dear friend who once bore the name—but it was in the old days of the monarchy, and for the sake of that friend I shall love you more than ever;" and patting Quentin on the head, she kissed him on the brow just as her son entered with a servant in livery, who came to announce that the carriage was at the door.

"Très-bien, Louis," said she; "monsieur will accompany us, Eugene, the day is so fine; he shall take his first drive with me, and you may follow on horseback if you choose. I don't like spurs in a carriage."

"I shall be very happy, my dear madame, though our mutual friend, the General de Ribeaupierre, has seen fit to send me no less than four times this morning with absurd messages to the sappers who are repairing the bridge of El Burgo," replied Eugene, whose boots and light-green uniform bore evident traces of mud.

"Come, Eugene, and never mind; as I am only your mamma, and not your intended, you have no need to be so particular with your toilet; and if your horse is weary, order a fresh one."

Quentin enjoyed the drive greatly, as it was his first active step towards final recovery and strength. It was the evening of a clear and sunny day, and Quentin surveyed, with equal delight and interest, the long lines of massive bastions, towers, and battlemented walls that enclosed the town and citadel of Corunna—that vast stone frontage, with all its rows of grim cannon that peered through dark port-holes or frowned on *barbette*, steeped in the warm radiance of a red setting sun that tinged the sea and surf with the hue of blood, sinking every alternate angle of the fortifications in deep and solemn shadow. The music of a French regimental band came floating pleasantly from time to time on the thin air, as they played the grand march of the Emperor along the ramparts; and now the carriage, by Eugene's desire, was stopped near a part of the citadel where Sir John Moore's grave lay, and where the French sappers were already building the great granite monument which the noble

Soult erected to his memory, and which the Marquis of Romana completed. Quentin descended from the carriage and approached the spot. He was the last, the only British soldier in Corunna now. He sat down on one of the blocks, and looked wistfully at the place where he knew the poor shattered corse lay uncoffined. Then the manly figure, the gentle face, the soldierly presence, and the winning manner of Moore came vividly to memory, and Quentin covered his eyes with his hand, as he could not control his emotion. He was the last solitary mourner by the grave of him whose memory Charles Wolfe embalmed in verse.

The French sappers, who had been singing and laughing gaily at their work, respected his grief; they became quite silent, and saluted him with great politeness. Then Madame de Ribeaupierre took him by the hand and they drove away.

In the general's well hung, cosy, and handsome Parisian carriage, he passed more than once over the field of battle. Its sad débris had vanished now; the people of the adjacent villages had gleaned up every bullet and button. The dead were buried in trenches. Here and there might lie a solitary grave, but already the young spring grass was growing over them all. Quentin knew the ground where the Borderers had been posted, and thus he knew which of those fatal mounds was likely to hold the noble and true-hearted Rowland Askerne, Colville, and others whom he knew and mourned for. Even the *étourdi* Eugene was silent, when, for the last time, they surveyed the field.

"Here the 24th charged a square of one of your Scots regiments," said he; "and here fell poor Jules de Marbœuf. It was his last battle."

"Killed?"

"Yes—dead as Hector, by some of your bare-legged Scotsmen, who took the eagle of the 24th. *Sacré Dieu!*—think of that!"*

"And Donna Isidora?" said Quentin, not caring much about the eagle.

"The sorrowful widow—*peste!* she is at Lugo with the Light Division."

"She is not coming here, I trust?"

"Can't say, mon camarade; but *pardieu*, I should hope not."

Though Quentin knew that his commission and promotion in

* In February after the battle, two French eagles, each weighing fifteen ounces of silver, were sold to a silversmith in Chichester by a soldier of the 92nd Highlanders, who said that he had bayoneted the Frenchmen, and brought the trophies home in his knapsack.—*Annuit Register* for 1809.

the 7th Fusiliers were now both secured, he writhed under the idea of being a prisoner of war; but there was no help for it. He had given his parole of honour, and by that he was bound to abide. Not even the keen longing to see Flora, to tell his story and lay his laurels, while they were yet fresh, at her feet, could lure him to break his bonds; but being intensely wearied of Corunna, he hailed with extreme satisfaction a change in the plans of the really delightful family with whom he resided.

Tidings of a new and more powerful expedition, destined to drive the French from Spain, under Sir Arthur Wellesley, the future Duke of Wellington, had now come to all the Emperor's marshals and garrisons officially; and thus General de Ribeaupierre resolved on sending his lady, in charge of Eugene, to Paris, whither they begged Quentin to accompany them. Anything was better than lingering in Corunna or setting out for Verdun; and so, bidding adieu to the kind old general, within a few weeks after his convalescence, Quentin found himself kindly adjusting the wraps and muffings of madame on the deck of the *Bien Aimé*, a privateer brig, mounting six 12-pounders, M. Marin, captain, bound for the mouth of the Loire; and long did he and Eugene pace the deck together that night, building castles, exchanging confidences, and smoking cigars, while the wild waves of the Bay of Biscay tore past in dark ridges to leeward, and the last of the Galician hills sank into the dark world of waters astern.

CHAPTER LXXVIII.

THE "BIEN AIMÉ."

"He had fought the red English, he said,
In many a battle in Spain;
He cursed the red English, and prayed
To meet and fight them again!"—THACKERAY.

LE BIEN AIMÉ encountered very rough weather, and beat hard against the westerly winds which always prevail in the Bay of Biscay, where the broad waves of the Atlantic roll in all their full and unbroken weight. The third night was so dark and gusty, that neither Quentin Kennedy nor Eugene de Ribeaupierre turned in, but remained at the table much later than usual, listening to the somewhat piratical yarns and experiences of M. Jehan Marin, a short, savage-looking fellow, who wore a tri-coloured nightcap, a pea-jacket, and a broad black belt, with a square brass buckle of most melodramatic size. He viewed

Quentin evidently with intense dislike, as one of those sacré Anglais, whom he hated as so many snakes or other reptiles, and to this sentiment was added a profound contempt for him as a soldier. Quentin was soon sensible of all this, but deemed it neither safe nor worth his while to notice it; besides, the life of a prisoner of war was deemed of very little value by land or sea in those days. On this night, just as they went on deck to have a last glance at the pitchy blackness amid which *Le Bien Aimé* was careering, a flash broke through it, and a cannon-shot boomed across her forefoot; another flash followed, and the shot went through her foresail, which was belying out upon the wind.

"Tonnerre de Dieu! what is that?" cried M. Marin, choking and sputtering with passion and alarm, as he jumped upon a caronade and peered to windward, from whence the assault came, but could see nothing, so intense was the darkness.

Boom! another heavy gun came, and now he could make out a strange ship, looming large and black on the larboard bow, and carrying an enormous spread of canvas, considering the nature of the night, and it was the guns of her starboard-quarter that were tickling *Le Bien Aimé* in this rough fashion.

"Nombri! de Beelzebub!" bellowed Captain Marin, "here we are in action without seeing or knowing who the devil it is with! Beat to quarters—pipe up the hammocks and open the magazine!"

Just as he was speaking and gesticulating furiously, another shot knocked the fiddle-head of the *Bien Aimé* all to splinters; so matters were looking decidedly serious. By this time, and long ere the drum beat, his crew, half-dressed, were all at their quarters, and the hammocks were bundled anyhow into the side nettings.

"Clear away those weather-guns—cast loose the lashings, and load!" shouted Marin; "stand by the watch to shorten sail; way aloft and hand the topgallant sails; small-arm men, aft, and blaze away!"

Le Bien Aimé was now hove full in the wind's eye, so that the next shot from this strange ship went no one knew where.

There were terrible confusion, growling, swearing, with lack of discipline, on board, but no lack of pluck among the crew, and fifty of the most finished ragamuffins that ever sailed from the Loire or Brest stood to their guns. The next cannon that flashed from the strange ship made Quentin, who clung to a belaying pin on the port side, spring backwards involuntarily, the red light of the explosion seemed so close; but it enabled him to see for an instant the large ship with her lee side full of men.

"She is a frigate, at least!" exclaimed Marin, with a frightful

oath, as he drew his cutlass; "we cannot fight her; she may be French, and the whole affair a mistake, though: hush, silence fore and aft—they are hailing!"

"Ho—brig ahoy!" sang out a voice in most unmistakable English.

Jehan Marin ground his yellow teeth—those cursed English! Could he doubt that any but they would first fire and then question?

"Hallo!" he replied.

"What brig is that?" hailed the officer, through a trumpet, and Quentin felt his heart beating wildly with anxiety and anticipation. Next moment he heard Eugene and the French skipper engaged in a brief but very angry expostulation.

"What is the matter?" he asked, as Eugene joined him.

"Don't inquire," said he, "lest I blush that I am a Frenchman."

"Then your conference concerned *me*?"

"It certainly did, mon ami."

"How?"

"Marin wished to force you to deceive your countrymen, by replying to them in English—replying with his pistol at your head. *Sang Dieu!* you comprehend?"

Before Quentin could reply, the question,

"What brig is that? d—n it, you had better look sharp!" came over the black surging water from the foe.

"Stand by the braces, and be ready to fill the sails to the yard-heads, and bear away right before the wind," said Marin; then, raising his voice, he shouted a deep and bitter curse through his trumpet.

"Hail again," cried the officer; "this is His Britannic Majesty's ship *Medusa*—send a boat off instantly with your skipper and his papers."

Instead of complying, Marin daringly gave orders to fire his three 12-pounders on the port-side, to fill his yards, and bear right away before the western breeze; but on the appearance of the first portfire glittering on his deck, bang came another shot from this pugnacious stranger, which took his foreyard right in the sling; it came crashing down on deck, breaking the arm of one man and the leg of another; and before M. Marin had made up his mind what to do next, the *Medusa*, a fifty-gun ship, forged a little way ahead of him, as if she meant to sweep his deck or sink him; but neither was her object, for a boat's crew of those "pestilent Englishmen," with pistols in their belts and cutlasses in their teeth, were alongside in a moment, holding on with boat-hooks to the forechains, as the now partly unmanageable brig

rose and fell heavily on the black waves of that stormy midnight sea. Another boat-load clung like leeches to the starboard quarter, and in less than five minutes the *Bien Aimé* was the lawful prize of the British frigate *Medusa*.

Her crew were all disarmed and placed under a guard of marines; a strong hawser was run on board and made fast to the capstan or windlass, the yard heads were trimmed, a jury foreyard rigged in a trice, and the privateer in tow of the *Medusa* stood off towards the coast of "perfidious Albion." The weather was so rough, however, that they were compelled to slack off or let go the tow-line; but lanterns were hoisted at the foreyard, and thus they kept company till daylight.

"Fortune changes," said Eugène, laughing with all the nonchalance of a Frenchman; "you are now free, and I am a prisoner."

The prize-master, a rough and somewhat elderly man for a middy—one of those hardworking fellows whose boast it used to be that they came into the service through the hawse-holes, questioned the cabin passengers sharply and categorically.

"You, sir," said he, looking at Eugène, cutlass in hand; "what are you?"

"Eugène de Ribeaupierre, sous-lieutenant in the French service, and ready to give my parole."

"Keep it till we are at Spithead; and *you*, sir," he added, turning furiously to Quentin, "are an Englishman, I see, and in the French service too—eh?"

"No, sir; I happen to be a Scotsman, and in the British service."

"Where are your papers?"

"I have none."

"Oho; d—n me, you have none?" said he, suspiciously.

"No; but my name is recorded in the ship's books as a prisoner of war, a lieutenant in the 7th Fusiliers, proceeding to Paris on parole."

The mid shook Quentin's hand on hearing this, and ordered a jorum of grog, in which Eugène good-naturedly joined him, remarking—"Ma foi, monsieur, don't be too sure of having us at the Spithead."

"Why not, if the wind holds good?"

"Some of our ships may retake us—aha!"

"No fear of that, mounseer; the sea at present is only open to *us*," was the composed reply.

Marin, who sat in a corner, imprecated his fate bitterly; he cursed what he considered Eugène's squeamishness, which prevented him from availing himself compulsorily of Quentin's aid

to deceive the *Medusa*; but consoled himself by the hope that "he would yet take it out of the hides of those 'sacré Anglais,' in some fashion or other."

"Take up the slack of your jawing-tackle, Johnny," said the mid; "drink your grog, shut up, and turn in; your ill luck to-night may be mine to-morrow."

Madame de Ribeaupierre was greatly concerned by the turn her affairs had taken; but at a time when the whole sea was covered by the cruisers of the largest fleet in the world, it was strange that she did not anticipate some such catastrophe.

When it was reported to the captain of the *Medusa* that the wife of General de Ribeaupierre was in the *Bien Aimé*, he politely offered her the use of a cabin on board his ship; but having no wish to be separated from Eugène, she continued in the privateer, with which the frigate kept company for several days, until she saw her close in shore under the white cliffs of Old England, when she brought her starboard tacks on board, and, like a great eagle in search of fresh prey, stood over towards the coast of France. Thus, on the evening of the 16th of March, exactly two months after the battle of Corunna, Quentin found the *Bien Aimé* safely anchored at Spithead, close by the guns of a line-of-battle ship. There Eugène gave his parole, and Quentin found himself a free man!

The news spread rapidly in Portsmouth and in the Isle of Wight that the wife and son of Bonaparte's favourite cavalry officer, the Governor of Corunna, had been brought in as prisoners; and thus, on the very day they were preparing to go on shore, escorted by Quentin, a staff-officer, in full uniform, came fussily on board in a boat pulled by marines. Quentin recognised in him Lloyd Conyers, the aide-de-camp, whom he had frequently seen in Spain.

He had come, he stated, "by direction of the General commanding in the Isle of Wight, to invite Madame de Ribeaupierre, with her friends and attendants, to share the hospitality of his house—to consider it as her home, in fact, until she could make such arrangements as she wished."

"Is the general married, monsieur?" asked madame, smiling; "for I am not so very old."

"Madame, the general is married, and is nearer seventy than sixty," replied Conyers, laughing behind his great staff plume. "A boat is in readiness, and a carriage awaits you on the beach. The general lives at Minden Lodge, St. Helen's—we dine at half-past six."

Madame de Ribeaupierre, who was considerably crushed and crestfallen, accepted the general's offer; and accompanied by her

maid, who had many misgivings and vague terrors of the natives, by her son and her aide-de-camp, as she laughingly styled Quentin, landed in the Isle of Wight; and for the first time in her life found herself treading English ground.

CHAPTER LXXIX.

MINDEN LODGE.

"What thing is Love, which nought can countervail,
Nought save itself? even such a thing is Love.
And worldly wealth in worth as far doth fail,
As lowest earth doth yield to heaven above.
Divine is Love, and scorneth worldly pelf,
And can be bought with nothing but with self."—RALEIGH.

THE month was only March; but in that southern portion of England, the white daisy and the golden buttercup already spotted the green sward; the hedge-rows, nearly in full-leaf, were quite like bird-meadows, so full were they of song; while the coo of the ring-dove and the wild pigeon were already heard in the copse. The gardens teemed with beautiful flowers, and the air was delicious, the heat of the great white chalky cliffs being tempered by the breeze from the deep blue sea.

When the three guests reached his residence at St. Helen's, the general and all his suite were absent, at the inspection of the parochial artillery; for even then, so lately as the days of Corunna, the ancient custom of each parish in the Isle of Wight providing itself with one small piece of cannon, usually a six-pounder, to be kept in the church, or some small house built for the purpose, was still in force; and the recent threats of invasion had made the islanders somewhat expert as gunners, in handling their brigade of some thirty field-pieces. Built on an eminence at the pretty village of St. Helen's, near the mouth of the Bradinghaven, Minden Lodge was a spacious and handsome mansion; and though the three visitors knew not the names of the localities, from the lofty windows of the spacious and elegant drawing-room they had a fine view of Calshot Castle, of Portsmouth steeped in sunny haze, about seven miles distant, its harbour crowded with shipping; Spithead, with all the men-of-war at anchor, and the little *Bien Aimé*, with the union-jack waving above her tricolour; while far off in distance rose the taper spire of Chichester Cathedral.

The rolling of carriage wheels upon gravel walks announced the return of the general's party from the inspection; but for a

time no one appeared, and already the hands of the ormulu clock indicated a quarter past six.

Madame had made rather an elaborate toilet; her maid had dressed and powdered her fine hair to perfection, and she was in all the amplitude of her flowered brocade and rich black lace, her antique steel and diamond ornaments, a gift from the Grand Monarque to her grandmother the Marquise de Louvre; Eugene had on the full uniform of the 24th Chasseurs à Cheval, minus only his sword; Quentin felt himself obliged to appear in some kind of uniform, too, and so had carefully brushed up his old and worn-out volunteer coat of the 25th, to which he added a pair of silver epaulettes and a crimson sash, bought from a Jew of Corunna, who had no doubt found them on the field. They were sorely discoloured and torn; but he had the handsome gold belt and the sabre of General Colbert—the gift of Moore. Embrowned, taller, fuller, manlier, and looking even more handsome than ever, he was not astonished at being totally unrecognised; though *he* was startled, and beyond description bewildered, when the familiar voice of old Jack Andrews (who was clad in the Crawford livery), as he threw open the drawing-room door, announced “Lord and Lady Rohallion, Miss Warrender, *and* Captain Conyers.”

Looking not a day older, but rather younger and better than when he had seen them last, Lord Rohallion entered in the full uniform of a general officer, as orthodoxly powdered and pig-tailed as ever; Lady Winifred in all the plenitude of her old-fashioned costume, with her high-dressed hair puffed and white as snow, and looking, though senior in years, somewhat the counterpart of Madame de Ribeaupierre, her necklace and ornaments being equally antique, with opals and diamonds that were *reversible* in the course of an entertainment; and there, too, was Flora, looking so charming, so dove-eyed, and blooming, in full dress for dinner, but leaning on the arm of a lisping and most-decidedly-too-attentive puppy of an aide-de-camp.

So confounded was Quentin by the sudden appearance of these four persons, that he stood as if rooted to the carpet, unable to speak or advance, while apologies were profusely made by Lord and Lady Rohallion for their absence at the inspection on Bemerston Downs.

“You will make this house your home, my dear Madame de Ribeaupierre,” said Lady Winifred, “until you choose to leave it for Paris——”

“We shall be in no hurry arranging the cartel for that,” said Lord Rohallion; “though I have no doubt,” he added to Eugene, “you will be impatient to rejoin your regiment—light cavalry, I think?” Eugene bowed very low; “and this gentleman——”

"Monsieur Kennedy—a name once very dear to me," said Madame de Ribeaupierre, presenting Quentin; "and dearer now again for the services he and my Eugène have performed for each other."

Lord Rohallion bowed, and shook the hand of Quentin cordially, but did not remark his features particularly, till the expression of astonishment and joy, half mingled by doubt and fear, which he saw, while surveying alternately the faces of Flora and Lady Winifred, attracted all his attention.

"Quentin—Quentin Kennedy!" they exclaimed together. Flora seemed tottering and deadly pale; but Lady Rohallion threw herself into his arms, and sobbed hysterically.

Conyers played with the tassels of his sash, and thought himself decidedly in the way. . . .

Brief and rapid were the questions asked, and explanations given now; other guests came crowding in till the dinner-party was complete, and Jack Andrews made the gong send its thunder from the vestibule: thus they were compelled to compose themselves, nor indulge in that which well-bred English society so eminently abhors—a scene.

"I was thought too old to command a brigade in the field, Quentin," said Lord Rohallion, shaking the hand of his young friend, at least for the sixth time; "so the Duke of York kindly sent me to this quiet place. If the flat-bottomed boats ever leave Boulogne, they will find me, however, at my post; and, egad! I hope to show them there is life in the old dog yet!"

Conyers, the aide, who no doubt usually acted as esquire to la belle Flora, was considerably put out—disgusted, in fact—when he found her completely appropriated by another; while he was compelled to offer his arm to the buxom wife of an adjutant of a Veteran battalion.

"Flora!"

"Quentin!"

They had no other words for each other, even in whispers, as they went mechanically to the dining-room, where all the cold formality of a grand state dinner was to be enacted and endured.

A strange throbbing thrill ran through Quentin's heart, as memory went back to that last meeting in the sycamore avenue, and *the last kiss* given there, as he seemed with the touch of her hand to take up the long-dropped link of a life that had passed away—his boyish life of joy and love at Rohallion. They were young, but, strange to say, in their instance, separation for a time, instead of cooling, strengthened their mutual regard; and when Flora spoke, the old familiar sound of her soft and beloved voice made the tender link complete. She drew off her glove

and smilingly held up a little white hand. There was but one ring on it—the diamond gift of Madame de Ribeaupierre, sent at a time when Quentin had no other gift to send; and the curious history of it afforded them ample conversation during dinner. As for Eugène, who sat opposite, he seemed immensely consoled, under his unhappy circumstances, by a blue-eyed and fair ringleted daughter of the Commissary General from Newport, that young lady's patriotic animosity to France seeming in no way to extend to a handsome young fellow in the green coat lapelled with white of the 24th Chasseurs à Cheval; so thus the daughter of "la perfide Albion" had it all her own way.

Then the old General and Madame de Ribeaupierre were, as Eugène phrased it in the French camp style, "like a couple of *fourbisseurs*," they sat with their powered heads so close together; but they were deep in recollections of the old court of the Bourbons, of the Scoto-French alliance, of the days of the monarchy, all of which Eugène was wont to stigmatize as "the rubbish of the world before the flood," for he was one of those young men who wisely, perhaps, don't see much use in looking back at any time.

Lady Rohallion had, of course, innumerable questions to ask concerning Cosmo; but, kept so distantly aloof as he had been by that uncompromising personage, Quentin found great difficulty in satisfying the anxious mother. Then Lord Rohallion asked many a question concerning the old Borderers; but as Quentin's battalion had been the *second*, and was consequently a new one, he had some difficulty in satisfying all his inquiries.

Fresh from foreign service and the seat of war, whence some rather exaggerated stories of scrapes and perils had preceded him, Quentin experienced all the intense boredom of finding himself "an object of interest." This annoyance was all the greater, that he was absorbing and absorbed by Flora, the heiress, the general's beautiful and wealthy ward, who had already turned the heads of all the hard-up fellows in the adjacent garrison towns.

All things have an end; even the longest and most stately of dinners, so in due time the ladies retired to the drawing-room. As Madame de Ribeaupierre passed Quentin, her cheek was flushed with pleasure and gratified pride by the attention she had received from the courtly old lord—that noble pair d'Ecosse; her eyes were bright, and she still looked indeed beautiful.

"Ah, my child, Quentin, I can see what I can see," she whispered; "it is *she* whom you love, then?"

"Yes, madame, most dearly," said Quentin, smiling.

"C'est un ange! and I shall always love her, too!" ex-

claimed the impulsive Frenchwoman, as she kissed Flora's blushing cheek.

"Quentin, follow us soon," said the latter, tapping him with her fan; "I want to hear more about that Spanish lady at the Villa de Maciera."

The gentlemen lingered over their wine; much "shop and pipeclay" were talked, with reserve, however, as Eugène was present; but the merits of the new shako, and the probability of the expected brevet, were as usual fully discussed. The first to join the ladies in the drawing-room was Quentin, who felt very much as if in a dream, from which he might waken to find himself in the cabin of the *Bien Aimé*, in the Villa de Orsan, or, worse still, in some comfortless bivouac in Estremadura; and glad were these united friends when the guests had taken their leave, and they were all left to themselves in the drawing-room. Much conversation and many explanations ensued; and a very simple remark, by stirring a certain chord of memory, was the happy means of bringing about a very unexpected revelation or *dénouement*—one, indeed, so remarkable as to deserve a chapter to itself.

CHAPTER LXXX.

THE REVELATIONS OF A NIGHT.

"Gather ye rosebuds while ye may!
 Old Time is still a-flying;
 And this same flower that smiles to-day,
 To-morrow will be dying.
 Then be not coy, but use your time,
 And while you may, go marry;
 For having lost but once your prime,
 You may for ever tarry."—HEEBICK.

"It has come strangely about, Madame Rohallion, how my son Eugène, and your—your friend, Mr. Kennedy, have met during the contingencies of service in Spain," said Madame de Ribeaupierre; "and it is all the more strange that *my* name was once Kennedy."

We are sorry to say that the good lady pronounced it Kinnidée.

"Yours, madame?"

"My first husband was so named."

"Madame has been twice married?"

"Yes; and Eugène is the only son of the general's first wife, for he has been twice married, too," said Madame Ribeaupierre, with one of her merry little laughs.

"But I have always loved you, madame, as my mother," said the young officer.

"Indeed, child, you never knew any other," replied madame, as Eugene kissed her forehead very affectionately.

"Then was your first husband a Scotsman?" asked Lord Rohallion.

"He was, monsieur le général, a captain in the King's service during the monarchy."

"Was he killed in action, madame?"

"No, poor man—he was drowned at sea."

"In what year was this?"

"Alas! it was in 1798."

A keen, bright glance was exchanged by Lord and Lady Rohallion on hearing this: a light seemed to break upon their minds simultaneously.

"Madame, pardon me," said the lady, very hurriedly, "but may I enquire what is your christian name?"

"Josephine."

"Josephine!"

"Yes, madame. I was named at the font, Josephine St. Marie Duré de Lusat."

"Good heavens, my lord, if it should be so!" exclaimed Lady Rohallion, hurrying to her escritoire and bringing forth an old faded and yellow packet, from which she took a ring—the same that had been found on Quentin's father. It bore the name of Josephine graven on the gold, and a crest, a demi-griffin cut on an amethyst.

"This ring, madame—this ring—where did it come from? It was my mother's gift to my first husband, Captain Kennedy, of the Scottish regiment de Berwick, in the service of France; and this letter," continued Madame de Ribeaupierre, with increasing agitation, "this letter was mine—mine, written to him after he had left me with our child to return to his own country, whither I was to follow him——"

"And this commission, madame?"

"Was his—was his," she exclaimed, becoming deeply excited, as she pressed to her lips the signature of Louis XVI. "How came it here? And this letter, too, of Monsieur le Comte d'Artois, written to him after the campaigns on the Meuse and Rhine?"

"They were found in the pocket-book of Quentin's father, when he was cast drowned on the beach, with him, then a little child, senseless and benumbed by cold," said Lady Rohallion, with one arm placed caressingly round the Frenchwoman's neck, and with her eyes full of tears, as the wild and stormy night on which our story opened came back to memory.

Madame Ribeaupierre became quite hysterical.

"My son—you ? oh, mon Dieu ! mon Dieu ! and this was your secret at the Villa de Orsan," she exclaimed, in a very touching voice, as she pressed to her breast the somewhat bewildered Quentin, who, having been deeply engaged with Flora, had heard not a word of the foregoing conversation.

After a time, however, she related that her husband, who had left Scotland in consequence of some quarrel, she believed, with his own family, had taken his mother's name of Kennedy, and entered the regiment de Berwick, in which he faithfully served the French monarchy, even after it was completely shattered by the Revolution. That, on a rumour rising that Monsieur then residing at Holyrood, was about to reconstitute the Hundred Scottish Guards, with consent of the British Government, he departed hurriedly from France, leaving her at Arques, with her mother, Madame Duré de Lusart, who was then on her death-bed. Accompanied by the Abbé Lebrun, an old friend, he set out for Scotland, taking with him their little son. She added, that the vessel in which they sailed was a Scottish brig, under cartel, and bound bound for the Clyde ; but it was, nevertheless, attacked by a French privateer, off the coast of Britain somewhere—where she knew not—but far to the north. The vessel was driven on a rock, and all perished save the Abbé Lebrun, who saw both her husband and child sink into the waves and die together. More fortunate, M. l'Abbé floated out to sea upon a spar, and was picked up next morning, in a most exhausted condition, by the same privateer which had done all the mischief. Notwithstanding all the skill of the great Doctor Thiebault, who came from Paris, her mother died, and now she found herself childless and alone in France, and where she was hourly in peril of the guillotine as an aristocrat. The Bastille had been razed to the ground ; that was good ; but the change that had come over France was not for the better ; "the gilded coach, the red-heeled slipper, and the supper of the Regency ; the powdered marquise, for a smile of whose dimpled mouth the deadly rapier flashed in the moonlight—the perfumed beauty, for one of whose glances a poet would have ransacked his brain to render it smoothly in verse ;" the high-bred old courtier, the gilded saloon—had all given place to regiments of sans-culottes, to assassins, and the sovereign people—to the République démocratique et sociale ; to planting trees of liberty, and grape-shotting the mob ; to women debating the existence of a God, and dancing nude in the fêtes of Venus ; to a France of heroes and madmen—a Paris of "monkeys and tigers !" Her country had become intolerable to her ; she was long in despair, she said, and but for the kindness and love of her

friend, Marie de Ribeaupierre, a chanoinesse of the Chapter of Salles, in Beaujolais, she must have sunk under the loss of all her friends; but after a time Marie's brother came; he was then a captain in the regiment of La Fère, a handsome man, and in the prime of life, and, happily for himself, stood high in the favour of Citizen Bonaparte. In the end, she added, with a little smile and a very faint blush, she learned to love him. They were married, and then she strove to console herself for the loss of her own child by making a pet of his, the little Eugène.

"Ah, mon Dieu! mon Dieu!" she exclaimed, "what subtle instinct was this? what mysterious voice was that which whispered in my heart to love you, Quentin? I have only learned your name to-night; but how often did I ask of myself, at the Villa de Orsan, what is this stranger—this young Scottish officer—to me, that I should feel so deeply interested in him? Oh, Ribeaupierre, my dear husband, what a strange story I shall have to tell you! That he, for whom I prayed nightly, and thanked God for saving the life of *your* son Eugène, proves to be mine—the child of my own bosom—my long lost little Quentin! Truly the hand of a kind and blessed Providence has been in all this!"

After she became a little more composed, she desired her maid to bring from her dressing-table a casket, which she unlocked, saying that she would show Quentin a miniature of his father—a relic on which she had not looked for many a day; and he gazed on it with eager, earnest, and mournful tenderness.

It was the face of a dark-complexioned and thoughtful-looking young man, with his hair simply tied by a blue ribbon; there was a singular combination of mildness, sadness, and softness in the features and their expression; but when it was handed to Lady Rohallion, a sharp little cry, as if of pain, escaped her.

"Reynold—my lord—look here—you know this!" she exclaimed.

"My brother Ranulph, for a thousand guineas! Why, madame, this is a miniature of my brother Ranulph Crawford, who was killed, we were told, in the defence of the Tuileries."

"No—no—impossible! impossible! Captain Crawford who fell there was our dear friend—he commanded the grenadiers of the regiment de Berwick. My husband took, I know not why, his mother's name in France; and that miniature be hung round my neck on the day we were married in Arques by the good Abbé Lebrun."

"I can swear that it was painted for me, about three years after Minden, by honest David Allan of Alloa, whose name should be within it."

"True, monsieur, behold!" she added, opening the locket by a

spring; "there is the name of Monsieur Allan, and this is Quentin's hair, when it was the colour of gold, woven up with—with his poor father's."

"This is wonder upon wonder!" exclaimed Flora Warrender, as she hung on the neck of Madame de Ribeaupierre, who kept the right hand of Quentin pressed upon her heart, while Eugène, who stood by, was stroking his moustache, and thinking if he had anything to do in the way of kissing he would certainly prefer Flora.

Lady Rohallion was silent.

So the boy, by whose cradle in infancy she had watched with such motherly solicitude, was the nephew of her husband, the cousin-german of Cosmo; the son of that younger brother who had been the first love of her girlish days—the worshipper of her girlish beauty, in the pleasant times long past in sunny Nithsdale, the courtly gentleman and gallant soldier of fortune, over whose life she had cast a shadow. It was a strange mystery!

Some such idea was passing in the mind of her husband.

"Good heavens, Winny! so that poor father, whose fate is yet a legend among our tenantry—the poor man who struggled so bravely to save his child, when the ship was shattered on the Partan Craig—who died in sight of Rohallion, and whom honest John Girvan buried as became a soldier in the old kirkyard—was my dear brother Ranulph!" exclaimed Lord Rohallion, with a sudden gush of affection and emotion; "and 'tis his boy we have so loved and protected, Winny! Poor Ranulph—poor Ranulph! I should like to have looked on your handsome and honest face once again ere it was laid in the grave; but it could not be, for I was absent. Madame, do you know that his drowned corpse was carried forth by his father's people from the gate of the house in which he was born, and every room of which has echoed to his voice in boyhood, and past the very haunts in which we played together, under the old sycamores of the avenue, by the Lollard's Linn and the Kelpie's Pool, on the Girvan Water. Thank God, poor Ranulph, you found a grave at last among your own people, and where your forefather's lie; but we have much to make amends for," added the old Lord, as he placed Flora's hand in that of Quentin; "may you both live long to enjoy all the happiness you deserve; and be assured that my last prayer will be for both of you!"

* * * * *

What follows?

Orange wreaths and snow-white satin dresses, kid gloves and wedding favours, compliments and kisses, a marriage settlement, and so forth, were all the subjects for mature consideration ere

long at Minden Lodge; and within a month Quentin *Crawford*—he had to change his name, as well as Flora—departed with his bride to spend the honeymoon among the green summer woods and purple heather braes of Rohallion; and joyful indeed was the salute that pealed from the guns on the battery—whilome those of La Bonne Citoyenne—under the direction of the old quartermaster, who concluded by a general salvo that scared the rooks from the keep, sent the seabirds screaming in flocks to the Partan Craig, and made the dominie jump a yard high in his square-toed shoes; and red and rousing were the bonfires that blazed on the old castle rock and on the heights of Ardgour in honour of the day.

Cosmo, we have said, was enjoying the seclusion and safety from duns afforded by the fortress of Verdun, where we have no wish to disturb him.

Monkton, long since retired upon full pay as colonel, is still one of the most popular members of the Caledonian U.S. Club; but poor old Middleton died a lieutenant-general some years ago, near his native place, the secluded village of the Stennis, in Lothian. The old watch, which was the providential means of saving his life in action, he never had repaired; but it always hung above his mantelpiece with the bullet in it, for he said that no clock in the land could ever remind him so well of time and eternity.

Donna Isidora accompanied the French troops to Paris, and made a tremendous sensation as a Spanish opera-dancer. In London she became the rage, and, as *La Fille de l'Air*, her benefits were ably puffed and conducted by her secretary, whose name always figured in the bills as El Senor Trevino.

Old John Girvan "sleeps the sleep that knows no waking" in the green kirkyard of Rohallion; but he lived to dandle a young Quentin on his knee, and to hear the dominie teach a little Flora to lisp her first letters under the old oak-trees of Ardgour.

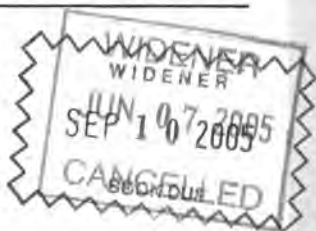
Eugène de Ribeaupierre, now one of the generals of the *second* Empire, has lived to lead his division of cavalry at Inkerman and the Tchernaya, at Solferino and Magenta, as bravely as ever his father did at Corunna, at Austerlitz, or Smolensko, in the wars of Napoleon the First.

THE END.

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